# HOME LIFE AMONG THE TAMILS IN THE SANGAM AGE

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2/10, Post Office Street

G. T. Madras

**Printed by S. Viswanathan at the Central Art Press, G. T., Madras**

**Q. H. No. MS. 161/C.—Paper supplied by party.**

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

The beginning of civilisation is still a matter of speculation. But it is an undeniable fact that India is a very ancient land and that the Dravidians inhabited the country long before the Aryan immigration. The Dravidians were a mighty race who could boast of a culture and civilisation exclusively their own and of great antiquity. Even after centuries of contact with the Aryans, the Dravidians maintained to a considerable extent their independent culture, which can be said to have survived even to this day. This is strongly borne out by the Sangam literature. The Sangam works no doubt were the results of long contact and mutual influence and intermixture with the Aryans but a definite vein of pure Dravidian civilisation is also noticeable throughout the works.

The stretch of time during which the Sangam literature, now available to us, had been nurtured is not precisely determinable. It was not written by one individual but is the work contributed by many authors at different times and developed by stages. It consists of two parts, *i.e.*, Aham and Puram. Aham was love-poetry and Puram concerned itself mainly with war themes.

The regions of lofty hills and thickly shaded hill slopes, the sparsely covered pasture lands, the green fields and the broad expanse of the sandy shores were the scenes of their theme. Though one region merged into the other imperceptibly, yet each was remarkable for its individual character. The hills, magnificent witnesses of creation, afforded the inhabitants a scope for manifesting unsophisticated love and untainted pleasure. Young people could roam

# CHAPTER II

## HOME AND ITS CONSTITUENTS

Woman is the fountain-head of love. She was free, independent and the equal of man and she was treated with uniform courtesy and respect. She was not a mere household beast of burden. She was the indispensable and the vital half of man. She was held in reverence and adoration in the Tamil land of the Sangam age.

The beautiful story of Twashtri shows how he created woman to be the joy and pain of man. " In the beginning when Twashtri came to the creation of woman, he found that he had exhausted his materials in the making of man and that no solid elements were left. In this dilemma, after profound meditation, he did as follows: He took the rotundity of the moon, and the curves of the creepers, and the clinging of tendrils, and the trembling of grass, and the slenderness of the reed, and the bloom of flowers, and the lightness of leaves, and the tapering of the elephant's trunk and the glances of the deer, and the clustering of rows of bees, and the joyous gaiety of sunbeams, and the weeping of clouds and the fickleness of the winds and the timidity of the hare and the vanity of the peacock and the softness of the parrot's bosom and the hardness of adamant and the sweetness of honey and the cruelty of the tiger and the warm glow of the fire and the coldness of snow and the chattering of jays and the cooing of kokila and the hypocrisy of the crane and the fidelity of the chakrawaka; and compounding all these together he made woman " and gave her to man. But after one week, man came to him and said: ' Lord, this creature that you have given me teases me beyond endurance, never leaving me alone and she requires incessant attention and takes all my time up and cries about nothing and is always idle; and so I have come to give her back again as I cannot live with her. So Twashtri

said: 'Very well'; and he took her back. Then after another week, man came again to him and said to him: 'Lord I find that my life is very lonely since I gave you back that creature. I remember how she used to dance and sing to me and look at me out of the corner of her eye and play with me and cling to me; and her laughter was music and she was beautiful to look at and soft to touch; so give her back to me again'. So Twashtri said: 'Very well' and gave her back again. Then, after only three days, man came back to him again and said: 'Lord' I know not how it is; but after all I have come to the conclusion that she is more of a trouble than a pleasure to me: so please take her back again: But Twashtri said: 'Out on you! Be off! I will have no more of this. You must manage how you can'. The man said: 'But I cannot live with her.' And Twashtri replied: 'Neither could you live without her.' And he turned his back on man and went on with his work. Then man said: 'What is to be done! For I cannot live either with or without her!"[1]

But owing to the change of time and circumstances woman came to be regarded as a source of pain and sorrow more than of anything else. The birth of a female child was thought to be an affliction. Her entry into the world has never been hailed joyfully. Meyer says, she is neither a world redeemer nor a world shaker but Samsárahetu, the 'source of the world'; the cause of samsara: in which, as the Indian says, pleasure and above all the pleasure of love, is but pain".[2] Mahabharata[3] and Ramayana[4] are full of instances where the parents lament over the birth of a girl. This was predominantly the Aryan conception, though the

1. Mystic Rose pp. 42-43.
2. Sexual Life in Ancient India, pp. 6 & 7.
3. Mahabharata XII 24-3-20: VI 3-7. V. 97-15, 16.
4. Ramayana VII 9, 10-11.

classic law giver Manu says. ‘where women are adored, there Gods abide.’ In the Sangam works we find a different picture. Woman as a loving wife and a tender mother, in her most natural and angelic calling found the greatest admiration from the poets of the Tamil land. To the Tamilian she was not a torment. She was not merely a bore: she was the path to his salvation and the light of his home. “For the blessing of a home is the wife, the ornaments are the children.”[1] She was not only the blessing of the home but also was the cause of the man’s status in society, for Valluvar says, “the majestic gait of a man, defying his slanderers, is denied to one who is not blessed with a wife of good repute.”[2] The presiding genius of a home is the woman. It has been said a home without its mistress is poor though it may be rich in everything else.[3] She is the light of the home[4] and the home becomes a desert in the absence of a wife.[5] Woman was precious to the man not only for his own pleasure but also to achieve the great social object of maintaining the race. The wife is a comrade and partner in life’s responsibilities. Such is the background of the nobler conception of the fair sex, discerned from the ancient Tamil works. Parents cherished daughters as much as sons.[6] A son was necessary to give sacrifices to the manes[7] but a daughter was welcome too. So we find that a contented home consisted of a dutiful husband, loving and dutiful wife and children.

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1. Kural 60. “மங்கலமென்ப மனையாட்சி மற்றதன்
   னன்கல நன்மக்கட் பேறு”
2. Kural 59. “புகழ்புரிந் தில்லிலோர்க் கில்லை யிகழ்வார்முன்
   னேறுபோல பீடு நடை”
3. Kural 52. “மனைமாட்சி யில்லாள்க ணில்லாயின் வாழ்க்கை
   யெனைமாட்சித் தாயினு மில”
4. Nanmanikkadigai “மனைக்கு விளக்கம் மடவாள்”
5. do do “மனைக்குப் பாழ் வாணுத லின்மை”
6. Puram 337; 356; Narrinai 29; 134; Ainkurunuru 257 Aham 12; 93 280; 189. Kalittogai 56
7. Puram 11. Aham 66

## CHAPTER III

# GIRLHOOD

Girls in the Tamil land enjoyed a life of comparative freedom and happiness. The Tamil literature gives us a clear picture of the happy time spent by the girl in her home before she was married. The games in which they found pleasure differed with their age. Convention has divided the period of life of women into seven stages. The first, the Pethai stage, the age of innocence was the earliest. Now Pethai has come to mean 'innocent' or 'simple.' This was the stage when the child with her companions played the favourite game of dolls. Later works have fixed this period as two years from 5—7. Next was the transitional stage from the child to the girl lasting for four years, *i.e.*, Pethumbai and according to Pattiyal works Mankai was the period when the girl blossomed into a maiden. Nachchinarkiniyar, the commentator of Tolkappiam, tells us that the age of marriage for girls was twelve.[1] Mankai stage was only a short one of about one year while the next one of Matandai (womanhood) was of a longer duration, *i.e.*, about five years. From Matandai the girl passed on to the Arivai stage (about 20-25) while the penultimate one of Therivai ran from 25 years to 31 years of age and the last one or the Perilam-pen was of an indefinite length running from 31 years of age.

**Pastimes.** Many of the pastimes were common to the girls of the five regions. Playing with dolls made of grass or silt was a favourite. The bulrush grass or the Cai or pancaik-korai was the one which was used for the purpose. Silt was used when the girls were playing on the sea-shore. The crude doll shaped out of mud or grass and decorated with flowers went by the name of pavai (doll)[2] called "Van-

1. Tolkappiam Porul 92.
2. Kuruntogai 114; Puram 283.

dar-Pavai" where 'Vandal' means silt. The wife teased the husband about his new love, thus :

> "Hearken, My Lord, Have we not seen your beloved
> Stamping and throwing the fine sand,
> To dry the sea which washed her doll away.
> Hearken, My Lord, have we not seen your beloved
> Standing, weeping on the shore, her black eyes gone red,
> For the doll, which was washed away by the sea."
> Hearken, My Lord, have we not seen your beloved
> Suckling the pavai which cannot suck ".[1]

Hopkins says that playing with dolls was the amusement of older girls, and that since Uttara at the time of her marriage still indulged herself in her doll game she was not a child then. But the author of 'Sexual Life in Ancient India' tells us it was not so.[2] We have also evidence to show that the dolls amused children as well as young maidens. In Puram 11 it is said that the girls of Karur, the capital of the Chera kings, played on the sands of 'An Porunai' by making dolls and decorating them with flowers of the neidal trees. The text speaks of them as "young girls with shining jewels" but the commentator says "they were of the pethai stage"[3] From this we cannot conclude that the play with dolls was indicative of the child stage of a girl. Kapilar, in Kalittogai, 59 says that the girl was no longer a child, but yet she was not of an age to understand the poignancy of love's darts. Thus it is that we find the lover accusing her saying "you are running away from me with your anklets tinkling, to play with toy utensils and gaily coloured doll." The commentator explains that the

1. Ainkurunuru *13—கிழவறகுரைதத பதது* 124—126
2. Sexual Life in Ancient India—Vol. I p. 9.
3. Puram 11.

doll was a wooden one, brightly coloured.[1] Most probably the wooden doll belonged to a later period. The doll was the toy not only of this child-girl but also of the coy maiden who could appreciate and feel vain about the helplessness of her lover. She would reproach him for imaginary foibles. The maid of the heroine who could no longer watch her mistress' attitude with calm indifference reproaches her saying, " are you reproaching him, for plucking the bulrush and making the doll for you so that your delicate fingers may not grow too red by tugging at the rough grass? Are you reproaching him for this bit of kindness?" [2]

The dolls of grass or clay seemed to have been loved greatly by the girls. In Kuruntogai we get the beautiful picture of the tenderness of a girl for her doll. The maid who had brought her mistress to the appointed place asked him (the lover) to let her return soon for 'she had laid her pavai on the bed of neidal flowers, and the cranes, fed on the aral fish, may while returning to their homes tread over her child (pavai) lying on the shore.'[3]

Another favourite out-door game seems to be that of swinging. The exhilarating influence felt by the person on the swing, as the board rises through the air, has been expressed by many eminent writers like De Quincey. Nowhere in Tamil literature do we find the custom of swinging practised as a religious or magical rite [4] The girls did not rock backwards and forwards either to ensure a good

1. Kali-t-togai 59.
2. Kali-t-togai.
3. Kuruntogai 144 " நெய்தற் பரப்பிற் பாவை கிடப்பியென்ன
னின்குறி வந்த னெனியறேர்க் கொண்க
செல்கஞ் செல்வியங் கொண்மோ வல்கலு
மார லருந்து வயிற்ற
நாரை மிதிக்கு மென்மக ளுதலே "
4 The Golden Bough Vol. II, pp. 449.

catch of fish or crops.[1] They went on swings only because it gave them pleasure. In the maritime regions the swings were hung from the branches of nalal and talai trees by creepers while on the hills they were hung near the millet fields. Even to-day in many homes in South India the swing slung from rafters by iron or brass chains forms the chief article of furniture. In North India in the month of March the Hindus observe a swinging festival for Lord Krishna, whose image is placed in the seat or cradle of a swing and with the break of dawn is rocked gently to and fro several times. In South India, swinging of the bride and bridegroom forms one of the rites in marriage ceremony. In the temples of South India, it is a very common thing to see the images of deities (male and female) placed side by side as in marriage and rocked to and fro.

From olden times Cirrili-ilaittal or building toy-houses has been a favourite pastime with girls. In later times, it was made the subject matter of a species of composition known as Usal and one of the topics of Pillai-Tamil. Where a goddess such as Meenakshi is the heroine, she is spoken of as a child and all the stages of childhood are sung. Cirril-ilaittal forms one of the stages. Narrinai 123 tells us of fisher-girls building toy-houses and decorating them with great eclat. The maid of the hills enjoyed it no less. Kapilar says how a tiny girl built a toy-house, and how the boy who later became her lover destroyed it.

Ball-game had been loved by Indian girls of all ages. Frequent mention is made of this in Sanskrit literature. Mahabharata says how Canta played with her ball.[2] Perum-pannarru-padai gives a vivid picture of the girls playing with balls (327-333). "The girls wearing delicate or fine

1. The Golden Bough, Vol. II, p. 449.
2. Mahabarata III 111-116; Bhagavata Puranam, VIII 12-15.

silk dresses and glittering ornaments frisked about, their anklets tinkling, tossed and struck the ornamented ball"[1]. This gives us briefly an identical picture of what is given in Daca-Kumara Caritam.[2] The mode of playing seems to have been the same, for Kandukavati[3] is said to have played the ball-game by directing its movement with her hand. Kalitogai 57 confirms this[4]. The balls used seemed to have been very finely coloured as they are always referred to in Tamil literature as Varip-pandu (ball with stripes) as in Mahabharata III (112-120).

The game of 'Kalangu' seems to be similar to the modern game of 'five stones'.[5] Kalangu is played with five or seven small stones or with the seeds of Guilandia known as molucca beans. Mollucca beans are called Kalangu in Tamil and from that the name of the game is obtained. Sometimes these seeds seemed to have been replaced by gold ones as in Porum-Pannarru Padai.[6] Like 'five stones' the seeds are thrown in the air and caught on the back of the palm and if the player does not succeed in catching them all together, those that fall on the ground have to be picked up with the fingers. An alternative form is, one seed is thrown up while the rest are placed on the ground, the former is then caught in the palm and thrown again for being caught a second time with those placed on the ground collected in the palm meanwhile. As they toss the seeds, they sing a particular song. As Pollux of Naukratis (A.D. 180) says "it is more especially a game of

1. Perum Panarru padai ll. 327-333.
2. Daca Cumara Caritam - Kale, pp. 150-151.
3. The word Kandukam itself means a ball of wood or pith for playing with (Ref.) Bhartruhari and Raghuvamsam.
4. Kali-t-togai 57.
5. A Spell of Words by L. Eckenstein, p. 77.
6. Perum-pan arvu padai.

women".[1] An improved form of this game is "ammanai," which is in vogue at present. It is played with hollow brass balls, about the size of a lemon, filled with tiny pebbles or pellets. The usual number of the balls is eleven or thirteen and all of them are tossed into the air continuously one after another and the player trying to keep them all in the air by dexterously throwing them again as they drop. The success lies in preventing any of them from falling to the ground. This game, as a speciality of women, has not been mentioned in ancient literature but has found a place in the literature of a later period. Manikkavasagar in his Tiruvasagam sings the praises of his Lord by the song of the maids playing ammanai. The song is known as Ammanai-p-pattu and is in the duet form.

**Occupation of the Girls**: Along with her merry-making the girl of the Tamil land has to do her bit in the running of the home. She had to help her parents in watching the fields[2] or in drying the fish[3] or in marketing.[4] We find a maid of the Neidal land, going to the suburb selling "a measure of salt for a measure of rice." Sometimes these fisher-girls deemed their salt to be too good even for pearls. Most probably pearls were not so much in demand as salt in those regions. The fishermen had their daughters to watch the salted fish.[5]

It was during these occupations that they amused themselves with games. The girls belonging to the hilly tracts

1. A Spell of Words, p. 77.
2. Kuruntogai 72; 197; 333; Narrinai 27: Aham 28; 126, 302; Anikurunuru 283.
3. Aham 20.
4. Aham 140.
5. Aham 340.

of the Tamil land, had to watch over the millet fields and guard them from such unwelcome guests as sparrows, parrots, etc.[1] They drove these birds away with slings or rattles தட்டை (bamboo split into thin pieces). Kurinci-p-pattu, ll 35-106 gives the account of a Kurava-girl watching over a millet field from the loft built near it. In Aham 28, the maid in order to warn the heroine tells her that if she were to neglect her duty as a watcher, her mother might stop her next day. If that were to happen she might not be able to meet her lover as frequently as before. Therefore she reminded the girl to ' drive the parrots away by making a peculiar noise and to sound her rattle oftener'. The shepherdess in Tamil land, after the manner of the milk-maid elsewhere, had to tend her flock, milk her cows and be in charge of her dairy. Mullai-k-kali which deals exclusively with the life of the shepherds tells us how these maids occupied themselves on their farms. In Sila-p-padikaram, Adaikkala Katai, Madavi, the shepherdess had to supply the royal palace with the required amount of butter and clarified ghee on specified days.

**The Seclusion of Girls**: In the carefree child romping about the hills or the river banks, the mother's shrewd eyes could perceive the subtle changes that would soon transform her into a bewitchingly beautiful maiden. The ever-watchful mother would carefully note these changes and see that the girl did not wander beyond the precincts of the house. She would tell her most suavely: "Thine breasts are filling up: sharp thorn-like teeth are whitening: thou art clad in the garment of leaves. Be not seen about with thy noisy band, for the hoary city hath demons many: wear thou this charm: step ye not beyond,

1. Kuruntogai 297.

for thou art no more a pethai but a pethumbai ".[1] The last two lines give the explanation for the internment of the girl. She had passed the pethai stage, and has reached that of pethumbai (12-14). This is the average time of puberty among the Indian girls. The mother kept the girl confined to the house either on her attainment of puberty or in immediate anticipation of the event.

The seclusion of girls at their first menstruation is found to have been prevalent among almost all the ancient peoples of the world. Even to-day in South India when girls attain their puberty they are kept aloof in a separate part of the house for a few days and are not allowed to touch anything or anyone. Among some castes a separate hut made of green palm leaves is erected for the girl by her maternal uncle and she is kept there with an old woman to attend to her needs. The taboo on her extends to a period of 16 days after which she is given a cleansing bath and is recalled to her normal duties. The popular ballad of 'Mathurai Veeraswamy' gives an interesting account of this custom. " Bommi, the daughter of the chief, attained her puberty. On that occasion Bomman, the father of Bommi, had a hut put up for her in a place to the west of the town and had it decorated well. He had his daughter Bommi installed there with all comforts and left the cobbler Chinnan to guard the hut and the maid within. Even the birds of the air, animals of the forest and reptiles of the earth should not be allowed to approach her. He must

1. Aham 7. முலைமுகஞ் செயதன முளளெயி றிலங்கின
தலைமுடி சானற தண்டழை யுடையை
யலமரு லாயமொ டியாங் கணும் படாஅல
மூபபுடை முது பதி தாககணங் குடைய
காபபும பூண்டிசிற கடையும போகலை
பேதை யலலை மேதையங குறுமகள
பெதும்பைப பருவத் தொதுங்கினை புறததென"

neither slumber nor relax the guard on account of wind or weather, darkness or light and he was asked to guard her thus for 30 days.

“பட்டணத்தை யாளும் பரிவான தொட்டியனும்
பொம்மண னாய்க்கன் மகன் பொம்மி யம்மாளென்பவள்
புத்தியறிந்ததின்மேல் பூவைதனை பொம்மணனும்
ஊருக்கு மேற்கே ஒருநாழி தூரத்திலே
பச்சை குடிசை கட்டி பண்பா யலங்கரித்து
பொம்மியம்மாளைப் பொங்கமுடன் கூட்டி வந்து
அந்த குடிசைதனில் அமர்ந்திருக்கச் செய்துவைத்து
மாதிகச்சின்னனை வரவழைத்துத் தானுடனே”
“அல்லும் பகலும் அறுபது நாழிகையும்
பட்சி பறவாமல் பகல் மோசம் வாராமல்
காட்டானை சிங்கம் கரடி புலி வாராமல்
கள்ளர் திருடர் கடிவிஷங்கள் தீண்டாமல்
காற்றுமழை வந்ததென்று காவல் தப்பி போகாமல்
இருட்டு கருக்கலென்று ஏமாந்திருக்காமல்
முப்பது நாளும் முழித்துக்கொண்டு தானிருந்து
பைங்கிளியாள் தன்னைப் பத்திரமாய்க் காத்திருப்பாய்”

Again after the period of taboo, the girl was recalled to her father's house with great pomp. The cleansing ceremony was done with the help of Brahmin priests, and at the end, a great feast was held in honour of the occasion.” After the period of 16 days, the hut is burnt down and her clothes are given away to the dhobi. The girl is given fresh clothes and is brought home amidst timbrels and music. Among the Zulus, a girl at her first menstruation has to cover her head with a blanket so that she may not be seen; for if she sees the shining orb of the skies, she would shrivel into a skeleton. Most naturally this induces her to keep herself well covered.[1] The people of New Ireland are more careful. Most probably they fear that much harm could be

1. The Golden Bough (abridged edition), Ch. 20.

done in the short interval between the attainment of puberty and the confinement of the girl. To minimise the disastrous effect they keep the girls confined from early years like eight or nine till they are taken out only to be married.[1] The Yaraikanna tribe of Cape York Peninsula, North Queensland, are more like the South Indians in their custom. Among them, the girl at puberty has to live by herself for a month or six weeks. During that period no man can see her. She should not see the sun lest her nose should be diseased.[2] Again among the Nootka Indians of Vancouver Islands, the girl is not allowed to see the Sun or the fire. For this reason she is held up in a sort of gallery covered all round with mats.[3] She has to remain in this state for days together. She may not touch anything or any part of her body.

The seclusion of girls at their first menstruation from the influence of the Sun seems also to have had its origin in the belief that the rays of the Sun possess a fertilising effect. The story of Kunti, the mother of Pandavas in the Mahabharata, provides a parallel. Kunti was having her first menstruation when she beheld the shining orb in all its splendour.[3] The consequence of this childish inquisitiveness was the birth of the invincible Karna. A counterpart of this story is found in the Greek legend of Danae. The King had been told that if she should see the rays of the Sun, she would melt away. So he had her confined in a subterranean tower, but in spite of it, Zeus reached her in the form of a shower of gold and impregnated her. The shower of gold most probably refers to the golden rays of

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1. The Golden Bough, (Abridged edition), Ch. 20.
2. The Golden Bough, Vol. III p. 208.
3. Do. do. p. 210.

the Sun. In neither of the stories is the Sun mentioned as the source of impregnation. Yet, from the foregoing examples it can be inferred that some kind of dread was the cause of the confinement and that it might have been the belief in the impregnating effect of the Sun's rays.

The menstruous woman has been tabooed among various peoples of the world. Among the Aryans, she was looked upon as unclean. We have many examples of the taboo laid on such women in Mahabharata and Ramayana.[1] In the Wakelbura tribe of South America, a menstruous woman should not be seen by any man. Any violation of this rule was punishable with death.[2]

The Hebrew prophet Jeremy, while condemning the idolators, charges them thus: "The menstruous woman and the woman in childbed touch their sacrifices."[3] The uncleanness lasted among them for seven days and on the eighth day the woman had to cleanse herself making special offering to the priest. (Leviticus, Ch. 15, 19-28). According to Pliny, "the touch of a menstruous woman turned wine to vinegar, blighted crops, killed seedlings, blasted gardens, brought down the fruit from the trees, dimmed mirrors, killed bees, caused mares to miscarry and so forth". It is believed that as the garments of the sacred are full of infection and kill those who toucn them, so are the clothes of a menstruous woman "[4]. An Australian black fellow who discovered that his wife had lain on his blanket at her menstrual period killed her and died of

1. Manu XI, pp. 171—179.
Mahabharata XIV, 116-119; XIII, 161-118.
Parasara VII, 9-18; Yagnavalkya I, 168;
Markandeya Puranam XXXII, 25.
2. The Golden Bough (abridged edition), Ch. 20.
3. The Apocrypha, The Epistle of Jeremy.
4. The Golden Bough (abridged edition), p. 207.

terror within a fortnight. Hence, Australian women during those times are forbidden under pain of death to touch anything that men use or even to tread the path that man frequents.[1]

Some tribes think that the very sight of a menstruous woman is dangerous to society, and so they have special skin covers made for her, which hide her completely and screen her away from the sight of men. During that period she may not touch anything, not even vessels for her food and drink. She has to drink water through a bamboo tube.[2]

A similar kind of practice exists among the Hindus also. A menstruous woman is strictly tabooed, she may not touch anything and is kept apart. The uncleanness lasts for three days. After the purificatory bath she takes up her normal household duties.

In Puram we have the expression (கலங்தொடாஅமகளிர்) (women who should not touch household articles).[3] This expression could only mean women who were ceremonially unclean either on account of menstruation or low birth. Evidences are wanting to show whether there existed taboo of the kind mentioned above.

The origin of this taboo seems to be the dread of the dangerous influences supposed to emanate from the woman during such periods. To minimise the evil she is more or less isolated. The evil is at the highest during the first menstruation and therefore she is almost insulated and is kept held up in a hammock as in South America or kept above the ground in a narrow cage as in New Ireland, Australia.[4] This suspension between heaven and earth is

1. The Golden Bough (abridged edition) p. 207
2. Do. do. Ch. 20.
3. Puram 299.
4. The Golden Bough Vol. III, p. 233.

to render her incapable of affecting the fertility of the earth by touching it or polluting the Sun by gazing at it. It is not only for the general good that she has to be segregated but also for personal benefit. For, if she should set her eyes on the Sun she might be impregnated as was Kunti or might shrivel into a skeleton as the Zulus believe,[1] or might be infested with sores all over her body as Macusis imagine.[2] "In short, the girl is viewed as charged with a powerful force which, if not kept within bounds, may prove destructive both to herself and to all with whom she comes in contact. To repress this force within the limits necessary for the safety of all concerned is the object of this taboo".[3]

## THE PLACE OF LOVE IN A GIRL'S LIFE

The girls of the Tamil land enjoyed considerable personal freedom within certain limits. It has been mentioned earlier in this chapter how young maidens occupied themselves by watching the millet fields or bartering their fish or having a merry time on the hill slopes or sands of rivers. It was on occasions like these that the first meeting of the lovers took place, a meeting which was believed to be brought about entirely by fate.[4]

Nakkirar in his commentary on Irayanar Ahaporul Sutram 2 says that the meeting of lovers is a dispensation and should be compared with the idea of the accidental meeting of the yoke and its pole, the former with the bore drifting in the North Sea and the latter coming from the South Sea and both getting fixed into each other as if by accident.[5]

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1. The Golden Bough, Vol. III
2. Do. do.
3. Do. do.
4. Puram 40; Kuruntogai 366; Aham 110; Kuruntogai 229.
5. See Jivaka Chintamani 2749

"வடகடலிட்ட ஒருநுகம் ஒருதுளை தென்கடலிட்ட
ஒருகழிசென்று கோத்தாற் போலவும்—தலைப்
பெய்து ஒருவரொருவரைக் காண்டல் நிமித்தமாகத்
தமிய ராவார்';

Great stress has been laid on this accidental meeting of lovers, for instance, in the case of the lover who was delighted in his love, says "our parents have been perfect strangers. Nor have we known each other before this. Yet our hearts have mingled just as the water running over red-soil imbibes the colour of the soil itself.

யாயு ஞாயும் யாரா கியரோ
வெந்தையும் மெம்முறைக் கேளிர்
யானு நீயு மெவ்வழி யறிதுஞ்
செம்புலப் பெய் நீர் போல
வன்புடை நெஞ்சந் தாங்கலந் தனவே "[1]

Such an union[2] brought about by divine ordinance or pal as the Tamilians called it, was not mere courtship. It was union in the full sense of the term and was considered quite legal. The Tamilian society accepted it as a natural union. There was no need for sacrificial rites or priests or mantras to make the union valid in the eyes of the public. Nature, the primary teacher of humanity, taught them where true love existed. Without the sophistry born out of lengthy considerations of sin and propriety their hearts flowed out, as water seeks its level and united in the blissful union of youth and love. This first union where Nature was their officiating priest, birds their musicians, and trees and hills their witnesses, was called 'Iyarkai Punarchi' natural consummation. What more is needed to affirm this event! Their security lay in the hills, in the birds

1. Kuruntogai 40

2. This corresponds to Gandharva form of marriage of the Aryans. Sakuntala's union with Dushyanta is an excellent example.

that chirped by, in the smiling streamlets and the glittering stars which had winked at them. Asked by her maid who were all with her at her union, she says quite innocently : " While I was playing with my maids on the shore, he came with his chariot and chariot-driver, spoke words sweet as honey and wooed and left me thereafter. Who then coud have been the witnesses of our union except the sands, talai plants, and birds?" [1]

This most natural form of union was not treated as a youthful frivolity. It was as indissoluble as any other union preceded by ceremonial rites. The maidens of the Tamil land believed implicitly in its validity.[2] None of the law-givers either Aryan or Tamilian have questioned its legality. Tholkappiam says that it is the form of union formed by love.

In Kuruntogai 366 the maid while explaining to the foster-mother the love episode of her young mistress, says, that it is not for them to judge the propriety of her actions for which Fate alone could be held responsible.[3] The passion and steadfastness of youthful and maidenly love have always been the admiration of poets ; for, one of them says 'could any one understand the mystery of her love ? Like a tender stalk holding the heavy fruit her frail body cherishes an immense love.'

1. யானுந் தோழியு மாயமு மாடுந் துறை நண்ணி
தானுந் தேரும் பாகனும் வந்தென் னலங் கொண்டார்
தேனும் பாலும் போல்வன சொல்லிப் பிரிவாரேல்
கானப் புள்ளுங் கைதையு மெல்லாங் கரியன்றே"
Kuruntogai 25 ; 26 ; யாப்பருங்கலக் காரிகை மேற்போல
Kuruntogai 25; 26;
2. Kuruntogai 57; 199; 313; 333, 377;
Ainkurunuru Kurinchi-p-pattu ll. 209—11
Aham 12: 18;
3. Kuruntogai 366.

சிறுகோட்டுப் பெரும்பழந் தூங்கியாங்கிவள்
உயிர்தவச் சிறிது காமமோ பெரிதே "[1]

Another says that her love is greater and deeper than the sea. காதல் கடலினும் பெரிதே[2]. Its yoke was not considered sweet or its burden light, for it meant to them a responsibility that had been accepted for life and perhaps even after death. One girl says that her love is more vast than the earth: loftier than the skies: boundless as the waters of the ocean.

" நிலத்தினுட் பெரிதே வானினு முயர்ந்தன்று
நீரினு மாரள வின்றே சாரற்
கருங்கோற் குறிஞ்சிப் பூக் கொண்டு
பெருந்தே னிழைக்கு நாடனொடு நட்பே "[3]

Another poet could not even entertain the remotest idea of the bond being broken. Here, the heroine says 'is it possible for our bond to break even if our ardour of love may cease?'

" காம மொழிவ தாயினும் யாமத்துக்
கருவி மாமழை வீழ்ந்தென வருவி
விடரகத் தியம்பு நாட வெந்
தொடர்புந் தேயுமோ நின் வயினானே "[4]

The lover was the sun of her life, for her heart turned to him as the flower of nerinchi turns to the sun.[5]

1. Kuruntogai 18.
2. Narrinai 166.
3. Kuruntogai 3.
4. Do. 42.
5. Do. 315.

" எழுதரு மதியங் கடற்கண் டாஅங்
கொழுகு வெள்ளருவி யோங்குமலை நாடன்
ஞாயி றனையன் றோழி
நெருஞ்சி யனையவென் பெரும் பணைத்தோளே

It was a bondage that bound them not only in this birth but through all their births.[1] Some of these maidens were so young and inexperienced that the first rush of this passion wholly absorbed them. One such maiden, in complete abandonment, says, 'even after seeing that my eyes are losing their lustre, my wrists getting thinner making my bangles slip off and my shoulders bending, I am not able to break the bond that I have contracted with him. Such is the inexplicable nature of the power which holds our friendship."

"மலரே ருண்கண் மாணலந் தொலைய
வளையேர் மென்றோண் நெகிழ்ந்ததன் றலையும்
மாற்று கின்றே தோழியாற் றலையே
அறிதற் கமையா நாட னொடு
செய்து கொண்ட தோர் சிறுநன் னட்பே"[2]

Another, with childlike simplicity, says that it is not death that I fear. I am only afraid that by death, I may lose the consciousness by which I could identify my lover.

" சாத லஞ்சே னஞ்சுவல் சாவிற்
பிறப்புப் பிறிதாகுவ தாயின்
மறக்குவேன் கொல்லென் காதல னெனவே ;'[3]

To them, love was life, and separation meant death.

" வாழ்தலென்ன காதல்
சாத லன்ன பிரிவரியோளே ';[4]

This natural union which secured each other more strongly than man-made law could, formed the theme of Tamil poets throughout. They called this phase of life as 'aham' or subjective life and divided it into various phases

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1. Kuruntogai 199 313 373; Ainkurunuru, 2; Aham 12—18.
2. Kuruntogai 397.
3. Narrinai 397.
4. Aham.

called 'turais'. It would be a valuable study if we could know the origin of these turai. Some might have been based on remote incidents of life while others might have sprung from a vivid imagination combined with legend. The first of these turais was, where the man after seeing the girl and drawn to her by irresistible love, desires to converse with her. He cannot in ordinary decency ask who she is. He has to approach her in a manner that would not offend her inherent delicacy or modesty. Therefore, being a hunter, he goes to her companion and enquires about the missed game ; or sometimes it so happens that fate is partial to him. The girls, while bathing in the ponds or rivers slip and he steps in and saves them and thus contracts friendship. Sometimes his hunting dogs may frighten the girl and drive her into his arms.[1] In all these adventures the girl's companion forms an indispensable third.

**The Girl's Maid.** This companion was always the daughter of the foster-mother.[2] They had been brought up together and were such inseparables that one learns to identify herself wholly with the other. The girl could be approached only through the maid. She was interested only in the moral and physical welfare of her friend and in maintaining them. She would make any personel sacrifice. Her constant attendance on her friend has been described very beautifully in a stanza of Kuruntogai. The lover, anxious to gain admission to the girl, watches her movements closely. He sees the companion following her everywhere, now at the top and again at the bottom and at every portion of the river in which the girl was swimming. He

1. களிறு தரு புணர்ச்சி : புனல் தரு புணர்ச்சி etc.

2. Tolkappiam Kalariyal 34.

"தோழிதானே செவிலிமகளே:

even wonders whether the companion would follow her if by any chance she were to be carried away by the current.

> " தலைப்புணைக் கொளினே தலைப்புணைக் கொள்ளும்
> கடைப்புணைக் கொளினே கடைப்புணைக் கொள்ளும்
> புணைகை விட்டுப் புனலோ டொழுகி
> னாண்டும் வருகுவள் போலு மாண்ட
> மாரிப் பித்திகத்து நீர்வார் கொழுமுகை
> செவ்வரி நுறழுங் கொழுங்கடை மழைக்கட்
> டுளிதலைத் தலைஇய தளிரன் னோளே "[1]

It is this close association that prompts the man to seek the help of the maid in his love adventure. He communicates to her the cause of his malady. Often the maid sympathised with him and informed her mistress about the lover who was pining away 'heaving sighs like a furnace'. The girl in all her virgin pride would not readily listen to her friend. So the maid invented her own ways and means to meet the affair. Sometimes she might entertain a suspicion about her friend's apparently innocent looks. One maid said very naively to her young mistress, 'Look here, thou with eyes like a blue lotus! A man dressed like a hunter with wreaths and bow used to pass by me often as if he were looking for the foot-prints of some missed game. He would never utter a word but his looks betrayed his grief; for my part I could not sleep at nights. I was not disinclined either, yet what could I do? He would not express his malady and it was not proper for me as a woman to let him know that I shared his feelings. You know what I did one day. I was on the swing which is near our millet field. He was passing by. I asked him quite casually to swing me a little and while he pulled the board a little I staggered. Immediately he caught me in his arms where I lay resting on his breast and unwilling to

1. Kuruntogai 222.

open my eyes. For I knew that the moment I opened my eyes, he would release his hold lest some prowler should witness the scene. Such is his decorum''".[1] Hearing this it was quite probable that the young mistress would blush if she had been herself guilty of such an act. Often, these tricks of the maid were of no avail to bring out the mind of the girl. As a final effort, she would ask the girl to come and worship the crescent moon.[2] From the day of her choice, her husband becomes her god to a Tamilian girl. His deity alone would she worship (cf. பாலைக்கலி 15). In such circumstances the girl could do nothing but refuse to worship the moon. The maid has thus triumphed in learning the truth. After this, the role of the maid becomes a very important one. She has to make the bond valid, otherwise it would be a shortlived happiness for the girl. The mother and foster-mother and above all the scandal-mongers of the village had to be counted upon and this made it imperative that the movements of the lovers should be closely guarded and kept secret.

The maid now enters upon her duty of acting as an intermediary between the lovers. Often the man would bring a leaf dress and ask her to give it to her mistress[3]. If it was accepted by the maid, he felt sure that his suit was welcome and that she would actively help him. Sometimes the maid would refuse to take the dress simply in fun and say "that these are not the kinds of leaves and flowers that are common in our village. Won't our companions laugh at us if we are to wear this new kind of leaf dress? So please take away your leaf dress.''[4] Acceptance was a form of open acknowledgement of his love. The maid might not

1. Kalit-t-togai 37.
2. Tolkappiam Porul 44 (Natchinar Kiniar commentary)
3. Narrinai 359 : Kuruntogai 214 : Ainkurunuru.
4. Ainkurunuru.

have been an active agent in the first meeting of the lovers but in the succeeding meetings she had to play the principal part : it was she who arranged the hour and place for the meeting of the lovers. The lovers often met and spent their time in swimming and wandering among the groves and hill-sides or bathing in the sea.[1] The maid seldom joined in these pleasures. The tongue of scandal never stopped wagging. Somehow people observed with curiosity the sparkling eyes of the girl and her developing physique. They were inquisitive to learn the cause of the stranger's frequent visits to the village.[2] The maid fearing exposure would ask him to change the time of his visit and come during nights. Those nocturnal meetings had to be in the proximity of the girl's house.[3] Even some casual slip might make the mother question the girl's movements. Then it became necessary for the maid to exercise her wits and save her friend : for in one instance the mother woke up on account of the disturbance caused by the lovers, and asked the maid whether she saw or heard anyone moving. The maid, in all innocence, said, "how could you think so, mother? You know there are some supernatural beings in these hills who assume the form of some of our beloved ones and visit us. You must have seen one of them ".[4] Even with all the help of the maid, this secret meeting could not last for more than two months. When she found that the man was delaying their marriage, she would ask him, of course, in an indirect manner, to stop his visits and make arrangements for the marriage. Sometimes it might also happen that the mother noticing the

1. Aham 302 ; Narrinai 147-138, Kuruntogai; 401.

2. Kuruntogai 24, 34, 51, 59, 139, 245, 284, 301, 311; Narrinai 3, 149, Aham 70, 95.

3. Tolkappiam, Porul 131; Aham 158-198; Narrinai 67, 83, 182.

4. Aham 158.

altered looks of the girl or hearing some gossip might have kept her closely guarded in the house. In this circumstance also, the maid had to implore the man to go and ask the girl's parents for her hand. These meetings were known as Pakar Kuri and Iravukkuri (meeting by day ; meeting by night).

We get a beautiful picture of the gossip-mongers or women of hell (நிரையப் பெண்டிர்) as the girl called them, standing in the street talking in whispers. They exchanged significant glances with their fingers on their noses, wondering at the audacity of the girl. They dared not talk openly because of the girl's status. She belonged to a great family.[1]

Occasionally some one bolder than the rest would voice her suspicion quite loudly and it would reach the mother who would then restrict her daughter's movements and make her virtually a prisoner. The days following this confinement were very bitter for the girl and her maid and the latter had to run hither and thither, consoling the weeping girl, and imploring the sluggish lover to hurry up and marry her (இற்செறிப்பு).

**Mother Consulting the Velan** : During this unrelaxing confinement the girl naturally started to pine. Her looks faded and she was wearing out. The mother noticed all these and became anxious. She could only guess that the girl was possessed by some supernatural beings ; for how could she know that her daughter was possessed by love ? She sent word to the Kattuvichchiyar. These would tell the mother to propitiate Velan by offerings and ascertain from him the reason of her daughter's malady.[2] Let the Velan say what he would : but could the girl allow the ritual to take

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1. Narrinai 149.
2. Kuruntogai 23-26; Narrinai 288 ; Ainkurunuru 241-50.

place ? No. It was against all the moral laws of the Tamil land, for it was thought sinful that a wife, so she considered herself, should be said to be possessed by Velan. More than that the shame that Veriyadal brought with it was too much for the delicate minded girl.[1] The maid seeing the distress of her friend, approached the mother and told her quite suavely that it was not Velan but love that had taken possession of the girl. Though stunned at first by the news, the mother could do nothing but convey it to the father, who on his part furiously exhibited his anger but finally accepted the inevitable and consented to marry his daughter to her lover.[2] This phase was called "Arattodu Nirral' (அறத்தொடு நிற்றல்). The term, in itself, is explanatory of the nature of their bond and what it meant to the Tamilian people. The father thus realised that his daughter's love was perfectly righteous and every one connected with her was made to undrestand the righteousness of natural love and they decided to stand by it. The girl feared to stand the fury of her people and sometimes hesitated to disclose her mind. Could she give up her love ? No. For, was not her bond indissoluble ? What could she do ? Love had transformed her from an innocent child into a determined woman. Love was the paramount consideration of her life at that stage and to maintain it all the latent virtues came into play. When love was at stake, she decided to face scandal and the derision of her parents and to follow the only path that is legitimately open to her.[3] Other circumstances such as unwelcome suitors would also hasten her decision.[4] She could no longer be

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1. Aham 292.
2. Kuruntogai 34-51 ; 351-374 ; Narrinai 365-393 ; Ainkurunuru 145-146 ; Ahan 282 ; Kalit-togai 39-41 ; 45-115.
3. Kuruntogai 112-124, 149, 343, 383 ; Narrinai 12-384, 349, Kuruntogai 11, 379, 385 ; Narrinai, 23
4. Ainkurunuru 200 ; Aham 65, 72, 95, 107, 221, 369,

indifferent and her maid, as a true friend, always helped her to form the right decision.[1] This final decision to leave her home, kith and kin, was not without pang for we get the picture of an irresolute maiden struggling to suppress her grief in leaving her home.[2]

Before proceeding further it is necessary to note a belief prevalent among the ancient Tamilians. It was not only a moral breach for the girl to marry anyone except her lover, but also it was considered a social danger. Kalittogai says, "can there be a good crop in a village where a girl, loving one, is given in marriage to another? Can the hunters succeed in their game? Can the honey-comb yield honey in a village where the parents commit this breach."[3] Mullai-Kali says that such breach followed by marriage, with another man was tantamount to a second marriage[4], which wrecked the happiness of the girl for life. This belief seems to have been prevalent among foreign tribes. "The Bahans or Kayans, a tribe in the interior of Borneo, believe that adultery is punished by the spirits, who visit the whole tribe with failure of crops and other misfortunes."[5] Even among the civilised races of antiquity such as the Jews, sexual crimes were supposed to have had disastrous effects. The Jews thought that the sterilising influence of this crime was not only limited to the fruits of the earth

1. Kuruntogai 11, 379, 385 ; Narrinai 23.
   ,, 217, 343, 383.
2. Narrinai 12,
3. Kali-t-togai 39, ll. 11-20,
4. ,, 114 " வரிமணன் முன்றுறைச் சிற்றில் புனைந்த
   திருந்த லாயத்தார் தம்முட் புணர்ந்த
   வொருமணந் தானறியு மாயினெனைத் துந்
   தெருமரல் கைவிட் டிருக்கோ வலர்ந்த
   விரிநீ ருடுக்கை யுலகம் பெறினு
   மருநெறி யாயர் மகளிர்க்
   கிருமணங் கூடுத லில்லியல் பன்றே "
5. Golden Bough, Ch. XI Part I, Vol. II,

but also to the women and cattle. " Adultery even when it is committed in ignorance had been considered as disastrous in effects."[1] Similar beliefs might have existed among the Tamilians of the Sangam age.

We have seen how the girl was left with the only alternative of leaving her home and following her lover. The maid would ask the man to make arrangements to take her away.[2] Often she could not repress the surging grief in her heart. Many are the instances wherein on the eve of separation the maid entreated the man to continue to love forever and cherish the girl who was renouncing all her friends for his sake.[3] In one instance, she says " Remember, my lord, she is now young and pretty. In course of time she may lose her beauty. Yet it is meet that you should continue to cherish her as you do now as she has chosen her lot trusting in your word."[4]

The mother, though adament at first, when she learnt of elopement, broke down with grief.[5] The foster-mother would go in search of the girl enquiring of the wayfarers whether they had met such and such a couple. Often she would obtain some clue from them and some would even chide her for her foolishness in following them.[6] When a foster-mother was going in search of her heartless-(brave) child she met a Brahmin pilgrim whom she asked " Holy Sire, did you happen to meet a stalwart youth followed by a pretty girl?" The Brahmin turned to her and said " Yes,

1. The Golden Bough, Ch. XI, Part I Vol. II
2. Ainkurunuru 366, 267.
3. Kuruntogai 115 : 397. Aham 247·286.
4. Narrinai 10.
5. Aham 35, 105, 145, 165, 369, Ainkurunuru 313, 371-380. Narrinai 29, 66, 143, 179, 293 ; Kuruntogai 44, 84, 144, 356, 378, 396.
6. Kuruntogai 44, 144, 356, 396. Aham 275.

I did and was glad that they had chosen the right thing, for of what use can sandalwood be to the hill where it grows ? It can be of use only to the man who knows its use. So also the pearl. Though the ocean is its mother, of what use is it to the waters. It can only be useful to the person who strings it and wears it. Are the strings of the yal of any use to the instrument itself ? They are of use only to the person who plays on them and produces the music. Your daughter, therefore, cannot be of any use to you. She has followed the proper path of Dharma by casting her lot with the man whom she loved. You should not hinder her in any manner."[1] Never were lovers of this kind condemned. On the contrary their youth and inexperience were often pitied and they were given shelter.[2] Till then the man might have been an indifferent lover ; but, once the true womanliness of the girl is manifested the realisation of the magnanimity of her sacrifice dawns on him. During the whole journey he is considerate and endeavours by his love and words to make her forget her weariness and sorrow.[3] He sees her gather flowers and weave them into a garland even in her strange surroundings. He watches her intently and on noticing it she will feel shy and cover her eyes with her palms. He gently moved close to her and said, "you think that you can hide yourself by covering your eyes but don't you know that your charms are torturing me more than your eyes." Some of those lovers were married on their way at some village.

> " கருவிரண் மந்திக் கல்லா வன்பார்ப்
> பிருவெதி ரீர்ங்கழை யேறிச் சிறுகோன்
> மதிபுடைப் பது போற் றோன்று நாட
> வரைந்தனை நீ யெனக் கேட்டியா
> னுரைத்த னெ னல்ல னோ வஃதென் யாய்க்கே "[5]

1. Palai-k-Kali.
2. Ainkurunuru 381-383.
3. Ainkurunuru 361-70.
4. ,, 361.

Sometimes the girl's people followed them in pursuit. But then the man, though a brave warrior, would not take up arms against her kith and kin. So in order to avoid unnecessary pain to his wife, he would hide himself but the girl would tell her people decisively that she could not go back.[1] These examples show the high level of culture which the ancient Tamilians possessed. The hero who would not hesitate to kill in a battle, would shrink from injuring any of his wife's relatives. Almost every Tamilian girl was a Juliet who would lay her life at the altar of love. But the Tamilian parents were not always Capulets and Montagues. When once they found out that all their objections were futile they took the event with grace. They would forgive the lovers, take them back into their fold and forget the past. We find many instances where the mothers prayed to the gods to bring their daughters back.[2] In some instances we learn that the mother of the man celebrated the nuptials, in her house, after the return of the lovers.[3]

It is also significant that we have no evidence of a girl being jilted or thwarted in her love. There is a poetic convention called "Madalurtal (மடலூர்தல்).[4] The parents having refused his suit, the man has no other choice than to appeal to the wise men of the place for their intercession (Kali —138) The usual convention is that he made a horse out of palmyra leaves, set it in a public place and would mount it holding the picture of the girl in his hand (Kali 139). Divining his intention either the girl married him of her own accord or the parents gave their consent to the marriage, or her relations gave her in marriage. But if all remained

1. Narrinai 48, 362; Ainkurunuru 312.
2. Ainkurunuru 391.
3. ,, 399.
4. Kali-t-togai 138-139, 140, 141.

adamant, the lover would cast himself down from a precipice and make an end of his unhappy love and life. (வரைபாய்தல்.) But this is a mere convention. It is improbable that it was ever practised.

The usual course was for the parents to arrange for the marriage after knowing the truth.

In Tamil society the father was the person who could give his daughter away in marriage and this he did either willingly or out of sheer necessity.

# CHAPTER IV

## MARRIAGE

In the last chapter we have seen how all the love adventures and intrigues of the girls ultimately led to marriage between the lovers concerned. It has been suggested that marriage as a sequel to free love was a survival from the primitive custom of promiscuity.[1] But the term used, i.e,, 'Gandharva marriage,' one of the eight forms of marriage prevalent in the countary, has given rise to various conjectures. That the expression Gandharva was borrowed from the Aryans needs no elaborate discussion. This form of marriage in its essentials had been prevalent among the Tamils without the 'Gandharva' in it. It was thus readily acceptable to the people of the Sangam age. But it must be remembered that the circumstances that might have been present in it according to the Aryan conception were almost absent in South India. Polyandry was unknown in the Sangam age. We have seen how lovers could not break their alliance under any circumstances and how the remotest idea of dissolution of a bond once made amounted to an evil which was supposed to be accompanied by disastrous results to the community. In the Sangam age marriage was considered to be the proper career for a girl. There was no vocation outside marriage for the vast majority of the Tamil girls. Girls enjoyed tolerable freedom in the selection of their husbands. Marriage was not always arranged in the matter of course way. Natural union resulting from love formed the essential feature of marriage and though it was ultimately considered to be the gift of the bride by her father or guardian to the most eligible suitor.

1. Primitive Marriage by Finck.

We have already seen that the form of marriage otherwise known as Gandharva form was the most popular one among the ancient Tamils and that it was one of the eight forms in vogue. Mahabharata and law-givers like Manu and Yagnavalkya had advocated the eight forms of marriage.

According to Manu, they are: Brahma, Daiva, Arsha, Prajapatya, Asura, Gandharva, Rakshasa and Paisacha.[1] It is said "that after finishing the Vedas or the vratas (vows for religious observances as a Brahmachari) or both giving the vara (of what he asks for, or desires) to the preceptor", he marries.[2]

The gift of a daughter, after decking her (with costly garments), and honouring her (by presents of jewels), to a man learned in the Veda, and of good conduct, whom (the father) himself invites, is called the *Brahma* rite.[3]

The gift of a daughter, who has been decked with ornaments, to a priest who duly officiates at a sacrifice, during the course of its performance, they call the *Daiva* rite.[4]

When (the father) gives away his daughter, according to the rule, after receiving from the bridegroom for (the fulfilment of) the sacred law, a cow and a bull, or two pairs, that is named the *Arsha* rite.[5]

The gift of a daughter (by her father), after he has addressed (the couple) with the text 'may both of you

1. Manu Ch III VI 29. 34
2. Extracts from Yagnavalkya by Damodar Krishna Kharandikar, p. 86 verse 51.
3. Extracts from Yagnavalkya by Damodar Krishna Karandikar, p. 86.
4. Do do do
5. Do do do

perform together your duties', and has shown honour (to the bridegroom), is called in the Smriti, the *Prajapatya* rite.[1]

When (the bridegroom) receives the maiden after having given as much as he can afford to the kinsmen and to the bride herself according to his own will, it is called the *Asura* rite.[2] But here the commentator of Tholkappiam differs from Manu and Yagnavalkya, for he says that Asura is the form in which the bridegroom wins the

> "முகையவிழ் கோதையைமுள்ளெயிற் றரிவையைத்
> தகைநலங் கருதுந் தருக்கின ருளரெனின்
> வினையிவை செய்தாற் கெளியண்மாற் றிவளெனத்
> தொகைநிலை யுரைத்தபின் றைப் பகைவலித்
> தன்னவை யாற்றிய வளவையிற் றயங்க
> நென்னிலை யசுரந் துணிந்த வாறே"

bride by some feat, ie., by fighting a bull or stringing a bow or felling a mark.[3]

How did this difference come about ? It is possible that Nachchinarkiniyar finding the form prevalent in Tamil literature might have followed it. It is also possible that Tholkappiar who is said to have been a disciple of Agastya derived his views from his 'Guru.' It has been a common practice to determine the right to the hand of a maid by contests. In the famous story of Penelope and Hippodamia the first races were run for no less than a prize than the hand of the princess of Pisa.[4] Icarius at Sparta set wooers of his daughter to run a race ; Ulysses won and wedded her.[5] This custom of racing for

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1. Extracts from Yagnavalkya, p. 86, Manu's Forms of Marriage.
2. Do do do
3. Tolkappiam—Porul 92.
4. The Golden Bough (abridged edition), Ch. XIV.
5. Do. Ch. XIV The succession to a kingdom.

a bride seems to have prevailed in many countries of the world. But it has gradually dwindled to a mere form or pretence. Among the Kirghiz there is a 'love chase" which is supposed to be a form of marriage.[1] Other contests than racing have also been designed to test the skill, strength and courage of the suitors. Arthur Young while speaking of the King's country, Ireland, tells us how during the 18th century a girl was given as a prize to the person who came successful in a hurling match. In the Indian epics also, we find that maidens had been offered as Virya culks (prize for heroic valour). Draupadi, the princess of Panchala, was proclaimed by her father as the prize to the person who could bend the mighty bow and shoot five arrows through the revolving wheel so as to hit the target beyond. Arjuna came out successful and won the incomparable Draupadi. Janaki, the golden princess of Videha, was also proclaimed as a Virya culka. In the Tamil country the contest for a bride was in vogue among the Ayar or shepherds. Among the people of the pastures, though the man was the chosen one of the maiden, yet he had to win her in a formal bull fight. He could have her only if he comes out successful in the bull fight.[2] Skill, other than physical strength, had also determined the hand of the maiden in the Tamil literature. Jivakan won the Gandharva princess Tattai, as the prize in a musical contest.[3] In this connection it is interesting to note that among the Bororos of Brazil chieftaincy is bestowed on the best singer.[4] Jivakan was skilled not only in music. His skill in archery came into play, when he hit the revolving pig and won the maiden Ilakkanai.[5]

1. The Golden Bough (abridged edition), Ch. XIV.
2. Mullai-k-kali.
3, 4 & 5. Jeevakachintamani (Gandharva Tattai Ilambakam).

Often a fight determined the husband for the girl. There is a particular convention in Tamil literature known as Mahat-par-kanchi prevalent among the warrior tribes. In this, when a suitor approached the father of the girl, the father would engage him in a fight. As the consequence of such a fight sometimes complete devastation took place. Yet the fathers never relented. Marudam Ilanakanar calls the bride as the angel of death to her village; for, the poet tells the king: "your men are greasing their spears, you are bubbling with anger." But her father will not say even one word. In these circumstances the coy maiden will be only like the spark that destroys the mighty tree. She is thus the death-dealing goddess to her village.

Passing on from the Asura, we come to the Gandharva form of marriage. This was the one in which love formed the chief part. The lovers met, loved and married. This was the form favoured by the Gandharvas, the celestial musicians. Gandharvas were one of those celestials who were privileged to a life of eternal music and pleasure. As such they wooed, and married where their hearts led them and this natural form of marriage that is of a man and woman seeing, loving and deciding to take each other as partner in their life's journey came to be called after them. From Tholkappiar's words it would be seen that this was almost the only form of marriage that was indigenous to the Tamilians. Even if it had not been a valid form, yet of necessity it had to precede the ritual. Among the Aryans free and natural love does not seem to have been favoured much. They were more materialistic than the simple Dravidians of the South. Manu says that this form of marriage was only for the warrior nobility.[1] Vishnu Purana says he that gives his daughter away so, thereby comes into the blessed

1. Manu III 26.

world of the Gandharvas.[1] Narada, on the other hand, says without hesitation that this kind of marriage belongs to all castes alike.[2] It has been explained by some that as a primitive form born out of promiscuity, it must have existed among the tribes of the primitive population of India. This is inconceivable to the people of the Sangam age who abhorred corruption in the matrimonial contract and who held that a woman's life was worthwhile only if she were to be the lady-love of the same man through their different births, and it is not probable that they could have been a community where every male member had a right to all the women of the tribe. More than that Tholkappiar says definitely that it was one of the eight forms advocated by the Vedas of the Aryans. Even then this Gandharva form was one of the most binding forms of marriage they could conceive. When corruption crept into this pure form, they introduced rituals and ceremonies as an insurance against infidelity and neglect. By performing the rituals they gave the utmost publicity to the contract so as to make any future dissolution impossible. The ceremonial rite of marriage was called "Karanam" by the Tamil scholars.[3]

The other two forms, Rakshasa and Paisacha, were considered to be improper. Rakshasa form was one in which "a forcible abduction of a maiden from her home, while she cries out and weeps after (her kinsmen) have been slain or wounded and (their houses) broken open, took place."[4]

"When (a man) by stealth seduces a girl who is sleeping, intoxicated, or disordered in intellect, it is considered

1. Vishnupurana XXIV 28.
2. Narada XII 44.
3. Tolkappiam, Porul 142.
4. Extracts from Yagnavalkya.

as the most base and sinful rite of the Pisacha."[1] Tamil scholars called the latter two as Peruntinai, *i.e.*, a phase that was too abhorrent. The commentator of Tholkappiam (Nachchinarkiniyar) says that it was called Peruntinai because it included four kinds of marriage which were unacceptable; but it is possible that the term came into existence just as the deadly cobra called 'Nalla Pambu'. These were inconceivable to the Dravidian society.

**The Parents' duty to marry away the daughter**: Even in Gandharva marriage, the father had to give his sanction for the marriage.[2] The marriage ceremony meant the giving away of the daughter either by the father or kinsfolk to the man who was her superior or equal. The kinsfolk who could give the girl away in marriage were mother's brothers, the girl's brothers, men of the same family and the teacher.[3]

**To whom the daughter shall be given**: Where the parents chose the man, they considered the following points to determine his suitability as the prospective son-in-law.[4]

**Equality of Birth**: According to the commentator of Tholkappiyam the bridegroom should be of the same caste, if not higher caste; but it was essential that he should not be of a lower caste. Caste system among the Tamils was rare. They were only called Kuravar, Ayar or Parathavar according to the region or profession to which they belonged. Thus, we find the son of a Chief marrying the daughter of a poor man.[5]

1. Extracts from Yagnavalkya.
2. Kuruntogai 51.
3. Tolkappiam, Porul 142. Nachchinarkiniyar's commentary.
4. Tolkappiam.
5. Narrinai 45.

**Nobility of conduct**: The next important factor to be considered in marriage was the nobility of the bridegroom. It was required that the pair should keep up the family dignity. This quality of maintaining the ancestral dignity by proper conduct has been called 'Kudimai' in Tamil.[1] It depended equally on the woman and it was her duty to maintain it under all circumstances.

Just as the man had to be steady in his business, so was the woman in maintaining her home. It was said of a housewife that she won the admiration of everyone by her ability in keeping the happy connections with relatives and being friendly with those who are not relatives.

**Age**: A perfect match was that when the bride was twelve years of age and the bridegroom sixteen years.

**Beauty**: Beauty of form was one of the qualities to be considered. However abstract love might be, yet beauty of form is an essential requisite to make it perfect. Perasiriyar, while explaining the reason for including this quality, says that natural love, *i.e.*, love at first sight, is created only by the attractiveness of the form while other kinds of love are brought about only by long and constant companionship.

**Love**: Reciprocated love.

**Self-Control**: The lover, though afflicted with love, would not voice it except through his looks (கலி 37.) Such control was called 'Nirai' in Tamil. Not only the man had to exercise this control but also the woman. She had to conduct herself in a becoming manner even under very strong emotions. Even in excessive grief, the girl should not voice forth her love as it would be a breach of decorum.

1. Tolkappiam, Porul 273 Perasiriyar's commentary.

**Benevolence**: Both must be of a benevolent disposition.

**Wealth**: Richness of spirit.

Yagnavalkya says that a brahmachari should marry "a woman who is possessed of the requisite qualifications, who has not been the wife of another previously, who is handsome, who is not his Sapinda and who is younger (than himself); one who is free from disease; one who has a brother and one whose pravara (the name of the family Rishi) and Gotra are not common, one who is removed five or seven degrees from his mother and father (respectively) one who is (descended) from a great family of men learned in the Vedas, the members of which are famous, one who is descended from a family which, even though prosperous is not tainted with a contagious disease (or blemish)." [1]

"The bridegroom should also be one who is possessed of these qualities, who is of the same class and who is learned in the Vedas, who is examined, with effort, in regard to manhood, who is young, who is talented and who is dear to the people."[2]

**The marriage by purchase**; Very rarely brides were purchased. There are indications in Sangam literature to the fact that in some cases a large dowry or bride price had to be given to the girl or girl's people. One bridegroom gave a chariot as the price of bangles:[3] another gave a small state for wedding trousseau.[4] There seems to have been no compulsion: yet the men paid the girls befittingly. In Mahabharata also we hear of Gadhi demanding a thousand white horses with one black ear each as the bride

1. Extracts from Yagnavalkya, verses 52-56.
2. Extracts from Yagnavalkya verses 52-56.
3. Narrinai 300.
4. Ainkurunuru 147.

price for his daughter.[1] This stridhana was called 'pacilai vilai'[2] in Tamil. Even to-day among many castes of South India a certain sum of money has to be paid by the bridegroom to the bride. This is called 'paricam' (பரிசம்) in ordinary parlance. Among the more sophisticated classes it has dwindled into the practice of giving jewels to the bride.

But whatever be the form of marriage, it had to be solemnised in a public manner. Where the parents chose the bridegrooms, they celebrated the marriage with great pomp and the parallel influences of the Aryans could be seen very clearly in the ritual of marriage. While we have examples of the marriage rite, purely Tamilian as in Aham 86, we also see along with it the combination of the Aryan and Tamilian customs. The Aryan form of ritual was distinguished by sacrificial fire and priest.

## THE WEDDING: THE FESTIVAL AND ITS USAGES

It is in the ritual that we find the two forms, Dravidian and Aryan, existing side by side. In both the forms an auspicious day had to be fixed on which the ceremony could be performed. According to Aham 136 the day on which the waxing moon was in conjunction with Rohini (சகடம்)[3] was considered auspicious. In Ramayana when the moon was in the tenth house, Uttara Phalguni, it was considered auspicious[4] and in Mahabharata it was the day when the moon was in the house Pushya that was considered auspicious for the wedding to take place.[5] Most probably the conjugal felicity was considered to increase by fixing the wedding day in the bright half of the month.

1. Mahabharata III-115-20.
2. Aham 90.
3. Aham 136; Silappadikaram, I ll: 50-51
4. Ramayana, I-70.
5. Mahabharata, I-198.

Even among Germans, it was considered as lucky to have the wedding on one of the days of the waxing half of the moon. When such an auspicious day had been fixed, the girl's people had a big pandal erected, the floor of which was spread with fresh sand. Great was the feasting. When the auspicious time came four matrons (who had their husbands living and who had borne children) bathed the bride by the water brought for that purpose, blessing her meanwhile saying. "Be thou the joy of the home by being faithful. Bear children good and many. May your love be ever young and growing," and as the various musical instruments played, the women brought her to the bridal chamber dressed in costly fresh garments with the sacred white thread tied with leaves of Vahai and the root of harialli grass round her neck.[1] We do not hear of the symbol of tali being tied. Nedunalvadai, while describing the sorrowing queen, suggests an ornament like tali but still no definite mention is made of it.[2] The ancient Tamilian symbol seems to have been a piece of white string tied with flowers and leaves. It resembles the wedding string mentioned in Raghuvamsa and Malathi Madhavam. In the former[3] it is said to have been made of wool and in the latter red thread.[4] Even to-day the wedding string has to be the thread dyed yellow in saffron. This seems to be the early Dravidian form of marriage. It is not accompanied by any sacrificial fire. Very soon Aryan influence must have penetrated into the Dravidian social customs and we find sacrificial fire also tendered on that occasion. The latter kind is found in the collection of Kalitogai[5]. There, a marriage is described

1. Aham 136.
2. Nedunalvadai ll. 138 (see Nallachchinarkiniyar's commentary)
3. Raghuvamsa XVI, 87.
4. Malati Madhavam V, 18.
5. Kalittogai 69.

where the bride is led round the sacrificial fire by the bridegroom according to the instructions of the Brahmin priest. By the time of Silappadikaram only the latter form is seen with all the rituals described in the epics. The wedding of Kannaki is remarkably Aryan in its rites. It is very interesting to see how it resembles the rite described in Ramayana.[1] "Vasishtha, set up the altar in a shed (prapamadhya), took sweet smelling flowers, golden cooking pots (svarna palika) and coloured pitchers, which were all furnished with shoots of trees, as also earthen platters (carava) decked with shoots, incense pans with perfumes, shell-shaped vessels, earthen dishes filled with roasted corn and unhusked corn laid out; and decked the altar round with these things. Vasishtha having strewn darbha-grass about according to the precept and to the recitation of holy words, lighted the flame on the altar and made sacrifice in the fire. Then Janaka led up Sita, adorned with every kind of ornament and now spoke to Kaucalya's son 'This is Sita, thy wife. Take her, I beg; take her hand with thy hand. As a faithful wife she, the one favoured of happiness, follows thee evermore as thy shadow'. After these words the king poured the water, consecrated with holy sentences, on Rama's hand." The account given in Silappadikaram seems to be like a faithful reproduction of the former with a touch of the pure Tamilian in it. "In the altar, decorated as if by Maya the celestial architect, on the day when the moon was in conjunction with Rohini, Kannaki, of Arundati-like chastity, was seated with Kovalan. The priest directed them according to the Vedas and following the holy words Kovalan led her round the sacrificial fire. Women carrying sweet-smelling incense, flowers, sandalwood paste, sweet-smelling powders, lamps,

1. Ramayana, I, 90.

vessels, green shoots, with filled pots led Kannaki to the bridal couch and placing her hand in that of Kovalan said 'May you not relax this bond'.[1] The last item is similar to the one described in Aham.[2] What could have been the signification of palikai or the "gardens of Adonis" as they are called? Sir J. G. Fraser in his volume on 'Magic and Religion' gives a very interesting explanation of this custom.

"Gardens of Adonis are cultivated also by the Hindus, with the intention apperently of ensuring the fertility of the earth and of mankind. Thus at Udaipur in Rajputana a festival is held in honour of Gouri, or Isani, the goddess of abundance. The rites begin when the Sun enters the sign of the Ram, the opening of the Hindu year. An image of the goddess Gouri is made of earth and a smaller one of her husband Iswara and the two are placed together. A small trench is next dug, barley is sown in it and the ground watered and heated artificially till the grain sprouts when the women dance round it hand in hand invoking the blessing of Gouri on their husbands. After that the young corn is taken up and distributed by the women to the men, who wear it in their turbans. In these rites the distribution of the barley shoots to the men and the invocation of a blessing on their husbands by the wives, point clearly to the desire of offspring as one motive for observing the custom. The same motive probably explains the use of Gardens of Adonis at the marriage of brahmins in the Madras Presidency. Seeds of five or nine sorts are mixed and sown in earthen pots which are made specially for the purpose and are filled with earth. Bride and bridegroom water the seeds both morning and evening for four days and on the fifth

1. Silappadikaram 1 ll. 54-64.
2. Aham, 86 ll. 13-14.

day the seedlings are thrown, like the real Gardens of Adonis into a tank or river ".[1] Whatever might have been the ceremony, the consummation could take place only on the fourth night after the wedding.[2]

**Continence by the Married Couple**: Meyer says, "the abstinence, too, by the newly married couple, for three whole days, has come down to us as a shining symbol from the mists of antiquity with its lofty conceptions of chastity ". This custom of abstaining from conjugal pleasures seems to have been practised by newly wedded couples in many countries of the world. It is interesting to note that " a Persian husband does not consummate the marriage for several days In the Kei Islands a woman or child sleeps between the married pair for three nights after the wedding. In Luzon this part is played by a boy. In South Celebes women called "brides' mothers" are deputed to prevent all intimacy between the bridal pair. In Achin old women keep them apart for seven nights. Amongst the Warramunga they have to abstain from sexual intercourse for three days.

Amongst the Nufoers the married couple are placed back to back on the first night so that they may not even see each other. The marriage is consummated on the fifth night. The Soeudanese bride may not look at her husband or speak to him for four days after the marriage. Indeed in Java generally the consummation of a marriage does not follow immediately on its celebration.

In America the Nahuas have to spend four days in seclusion strictly guarded by old women. On no account

1. The Golden Bough, Vol I.

2 Tolkappiam, Porul 146 (Nachchinarkiniyar's commentary). Aham-சூத்திரவுரை.

were they to allow their passions to get the better of them or to indulge in carnal intercourse. The Thlinkeet bridegroom could not claim his rights to intercourse for four weeks after the marriage. Ten days were the forbidden period with the Nootkas. The Caribs of Cuba were strictly prohibited from intercourse with their wives on the first night after the wedding. The same rule is applied in distant Cochin.

Egyptian husbands deny themselves their conjugal rights for a week or longer after marrying a virgin ; and the same appears to have been true of the Muslim world in general and in Biblical times. It certainly was the case later among Jews that a virgin was entitled to claim a delay of a year before the marriage was consummated and it is interesting to note in connection with these customs in which the virginity of the bride is specifically mentioned that the delay for a widow was only thirty days. The union became legal long before actual consummation took place. Among the Aryans the girl was thought to belong first to Soma (Moon, Gandharva and Agni and then only to her husband, so that the husband has a right to her only on the fourth night after the marriage.

This belief seems to have been imbibed by the Tamilians by contact with their Aryan neighbours. Even as early as Tolkappiam it is said that in regular marriage the man could have the girl only on the fourth night: for the commentator says:

> இதன்பொருள் ஆதிக் கரணமும் ஐயர் யாத்த கரணமு
> மென்றும் இருவகைச் சடங்காலும் ஒரு குறைபாடின்
> றாய் மூன்று இரவின் முயக்கம் இன்றி ஆன்றோர்க்கு
> அமைந்த வகையாற் பள்ளிசெய்து ஒழுகி நான்காம்
> பக லெல்லை முடிந்த காலத்து''
> ஆன்றோராவார், மதியுங் கந்தருவவும் அங்கியும்[1]

1. Tolkappiam—Porul. 146. Nachchinarkiniyar's commentary.

This continence is not required of couples during their clandestine love. Then why is coition outside wedlock not dangerous? Is it because of its uncleanness? And why is continence only kept for so short a time? For we know from the existing literature of the Tamil land that consummation followed the first meeting of the lovers and it was called "Iyarkkai Punarchi." Naturally enough the girl could not understand this new "romantic reserve" of her lover, especially after the marriage when they could be husband and wife without any moral compunction. So she demands an explanation and the man explains it thus. "Since first you belong to Soma, then to Gandharvas and to Agni, respectively, they have you on the first three nights. Then Agni gives you to be my own. It is declared so in the Vedas."

> "அது முதலாஅ தண்கதிர்ச் செல்வற்கும், இடை-
> நாள் கந்தருவருக்கும், பின்னாள் அங்கியங்
> கடவுட்கும் அளித்து நான்காம் நாள் அங்கியங்
> கடவுள் எனக்கு நின்னை அளிப்ப யான் நுகர
> வேண்டிற்று; அங்ஙனம் வேதங் கூறுதலால்
> எனத் தலைவிக்கு விளங்கக் கூறுதல்"
> உதாரணம் இக் காலத்தின்று"[1]

Certain marriage customs prevailing among the peoples of the world may serve as explanations for this extraordinary fact. Turning now to the marriage ceremony, we find that there is in the first place a necessity to guard against external dangers, especially dangers of a mysterious kind. For instance, in many parts of Europe, including England there is, or was the custom of firing over the heads of the bride and bridegroom on the way to or from the Church. Among the Mordvins, when the bridegroom and his friends, leave for the house of the bride, the best man

1. Tolkappiam—Porul. 146. Nachchinarkiniyar's commentary.

goes thrice round the party with a drawn sword, calling down curses upon ill-wishers. A still more definite example is the ancient Indian ceremony, during which arrows were shot into the air. with the words 'I pierce the eyes of the spirits who surround the bride.' On these same lines is to be explained the old Roman custom in which the bridegroom had to comb his bride's hair with a spear."[1] "Thus with marriage but not with sexual intercourse; outside marriage the man is threatened by the sharpest malice of magical powers. But the demons are very stupid. So they only watch the door, believe that if the child has an ugly name or is spoken of slightingly, then nothing will happen and so on. If then the newly wedded refrain at the beginning, these simple fools of spirits imagine that it will go on in this way."

"This dread of the spirits-owners of the girl before her marriage is very great and this combined with the superstitious dread before the mystery of the first blood which gives an opening for the demons—the first cause of the so-called "right" of the first night. So the husband resigns the right to enjoy the virginity he so often insists on. Therefore it became a necessity through a very disagreeable affair to get the girl deflowered by a proxy. A slave or a stranger is called in for the task ; the kinsfolk or the girl herself has to see to the defloration as a duty." [2]

The defloration of the bride by proxy finds its most elaborate development among the Aruntas of Central Asia. Among the natives who have a complicated system of relationship, a girl is destined for a particular man almost from birth. As soon as she reaches puberty she is artifi-

1. Men against Women : Theodore Besterman.
2. Sexual Life in Ancient India, Meyer JJ. pp. 313-314.

cially deflowered by a specified person, who is never the husband, assisted by certain other men. Immediately the hymen is perforated these men have access to her in a fixed order.

Among many other peoples the defloration is performed by the father; this is the case among the Sakars, the Battas and the Alfoers of Celebes. Amongst the Todas, shortly before puberty, 'a man of strong physique comes and stops in the village for one night and has intercourse with the girl. This must take place before puberty and it seemed that there were few things regarded as more disgraceful than that this ceremony should be delayed till after this period. It might be a subject of reproach and abuse for the remainder of the woman's life and it was even said that men might refuse to marry her if this ceremony had not been performed at the proper time.

In the Phillipines there was a special group of men whose business it was to deflower brides. The task was often performed by the priest and this sometimes developed into such as that of the Greenlanders. They paid the 'angekok' or priest to have connection with their wives, since the child of such a holy man was bound to be better than others. The more usual principle of defloration pure and simple by priests was particularly common in the ancient American civilisation. The Tahus took their brides to a priest to verify whether they were virgins and then to deflower them. In Nicaragua the people had a temple-priest, whose duty it was to sleep with the bride the night before the marriage. In Guatamela the high priest had to spend the first night with the newly married bride. In Cumana wives, but not concubines, were deflowered by the priests and any nonconformity with this rule was consider-

ed a crime'.[1] Somewhat similar to this is the "Talikkatu ceremony" in Malabar. At the time of puberty, a man is called in to tie the tali or the symbol of marriage to the girl and the man who ties it is not the legal husband. It is said to mean nothing more than the evidence of having attained puberty; but why should a stranger be called in for the task? Could it be a symbol of the custom of the defloration by a proxy that was prevalent among the ancient peoples of the world?

Among the ancient Hebrews the thought seems to have been present that through self-denial or even-self torture the demons and the gods are won over, for we find Tobias, the son of Tobit, married Sarah the daughter of Raguel in Ecbatana of Media only after relieving her from the clutches of Asmodaeus, the evil spirit. "The same day it happened unto Sarah, the daughter of Raguel in Ecbatana of Media, that she also was reproached by her father's maid servants; because that she had been given to seven husbands and Asmodaeus the evil spirit slew them, before they had lain with her. Tobias with the help of Raphael which was an angel went to the house of Raguel and sought lodging there for the night. Since Raguel who was the kinsman of Tobias he gave Sarah, his daughter, as wife to Tobias. And when they had finished their supper they brought Tobias in unto her. But as he went, he remembered the words of Raphael and took the ashes of the incense, and put the heart and the liver of the fish thereupon and made a smoke therewith. But when the devil smelled the smell, he fled into the uppermost part of Egypt and the angel bound him. But after they were both shut in together, Tobias rose up from the bed and said: 'Sister arise and let us pray that the Lord

1. 'Men against Women, by Theodore Besterman.

may have mercy on us.' And Tobias began to say: 'Blessed art thou. O God of our fathers and blessed is thy holy and glorious name for ever, let the heavens bless thee and all thy creatures. Thou madest Adam and gavest him Eve his wife for a helper and a stay of them came the seed of men; thou didst say, it is not good that the man should be alone; let us make him a helper like unto him. And now, O Lord, I take not this my sister for lust, but in truth; command that I may find mercy and grow old with her.' And she said with him, 'Amen.' And they slept both that night.

"And Raguel arose and went and dug a grave, saying, lest he also should die. And Raguel came into his house, and said to Edna his wife, 'send the maid-servants and let them see whether he be alive; but if not that we may bury him and no man know it.' So the maid-servant opened the door and went in and found them both sleeping and came forth and told them that he was alive. And Raguel blessed God."[1]

The Vedic thought is still more advanced as the spirits who are the owners of the girl are not evil spirits like Asmodeus but benefactors, for, "Soma (the moon) gives her purity (cauca), Gandharva, her sweet voice, and the Fire-god gives her the stainlessness in her whole body and being. 'Such being the gifts bestowed by them it is but right that they should retain the rights of the 'first night'.[2] But why should they claim this right of theirs only when the man becomes the legal owner of the girl? For we hear nothing of this romantic reserve on the part of a Tamilian lover during the period of 'Kalavu'. Is it because supernatural beings of every kind know that they can intervene and appropriate fair women only if she belongs legally to a

1. The Apocrypha—Book of Tobit.
2. Sexual Life in Ancient India, J.J. Meyer, Vol. II p. 314.

mortal man. Most probably! So men in other countries found out a way to fool these lustful spirits. Either they had the girl deflowered by a proxy, who took the evil effects on himself or practised strict continence through their self-denial and torture as did Tobias in the case of the Gandharva Marriage, or gave her to the spirits for three nights and when the spirits handed her over to the owner, the man had her.

Meyer in his "Sexual Life in Ancient India" says, "many wedding customs such as the well-known fight for the bride, her struggles, the pitched fight with the bridegroom, the keeping back of the bride and so on, have been traced back to marriage by capture. Here and there it may be that one at least of the reasons is to be found in this. But originally probably there was often the purpose of throwing dust in the evil spirits' eyes".[1]

1. Sexual Life in Ancient India by Meyer Vol. II.

# CHAPTER V

## THE WIFE

On the day when the girl had been led to the man with the blessing and injunction to be truthful commences her responsibilities as a housewife. She shoulders the burden of the duties of the family and tries to be a perfect hostess, a sympathetic mistress, the delicate love, chastising wife and the forgiving friend and forbearing matron.

**The wife as a hostess.** Life was not always a bed of roses to a woman. It was not for nothing that many undesirable things escaped from Pandora's box. One of these evils, which has existed in human society from time immemorial, is called by the name of 'prostitution'. It was this evil that injured the wife most vitally The man, forsaking his duty, left the wife for the courtesan. This caused ill-humour between husband and wife and between them. After the period of infatuation was over, he retraced his steps to the home with a guilty conscience and expecting a chastisement. To avoid the scene that was inevitable he brought a guest with him.[1] The wife had to welcome the guest and entertain him. So she laid aside her grievance against her husband and arranged to make the guest feel at home. She prepared the meals herself while her eyes watered by the smoke filling them and she often wiped the drops of perspiration gathering on her crescent-shaped forehead with the loose end of her saree.[2] Even if the guest were to be a tiring sort arriving at an untimely hour, the woman received him with the usual smile and gave him

1. Narrinai 41 ; 120.
2. Do. 120.

food prepared with clarified butter.[1] A wife, while praying to the deity, prays that the crops may increase so that she may feed a greater number of guests.[2] Such was the delightful hospitality of these housewives.

**The wife as a sympathetic mistress.** It was the sympathy of the mistress that often made the servants risk even their master's displeasure. The panan attached to a household could not bear to see the grief of his mistress caused by the man's unfaithfulness. He would seek his master and by gentle yet firm words tell him of the suffering of his wife at home[3]. Often the servants rejoice at the home-coming of the master, for their mistress would be happy.

The man had to leave his home often to a foreign place, earn money[4] or to discharge his duties to his king[5] or to pursue his studies.[6] On these occasions the wife seldom accompanied him and never when he crossed the waters.[7] Sometimes these periods of separation were very long. The phase of love, mullai, has been taken to mean awaiting the lover in patience. This has been counted as one of the foremost among the wifely duties. Perhaps this phase of love constituted what is technically known as கற்பு and this is borne out by the meaning of the word "mullai." Great was her suffering, when her husband did not return at the expected time. Sometimes she sent messengers or her maid did so. Often she lay enveloped in sorrow, offering prayers to the various gods for the safe return of her lord. In Nedunalvadai, we see the grief-stricken

1. Narrinai 342 & 374.
2. Ainkurunuru 1.
3. Do. 471–80 Aham 14 : 244 : Narrinai 167. Kuruntogai 75-85.
4. Tolkappiam, Porul 28
5. Do. 175.
6. Do. 175 & 34.
7. Do. 34.

queen lying inconsolable as the women come and tell her how a good chance had been received during the propitiation of Korravai.[1] She had the coloured thread tied as a protection round her wrists giving an impression of the bracelet. This sacred thread was worn during the observance of the vow or nonbu (கைக்நூல்), she has undertaken.[2] Paripadal and Mullaikkali give examples of the wives offering prayers or consulting the sooth-sayers for the safe return of their husbands. In another place the wife, vexed with the interminable waiting, declares very angrily that she would neither offer prayers to the Goddess with the Trident nor would she wear the sacred thread, nor consult the sooth-sayers nor the omen of the birds.[3] During these days of separation the wife removed all her ornaments.[4] The Tamil matrons considered themselves as the property of the man they loved and when he was away, it did not become a wife to adorn herself with ornaments. Even flowers as the symbols of the married state were used sparingly.[5]

Similar ideas seemed to have been current among the Aryans also. Satyabhama, while on a visit to Draupadi, wanted to know the cause of her power over the sons of Kunti. The latter told her that it was not owing to fasting, vows of mortification or asceticism but because whenever her husbands went on a journey on some business of the family, then she gave up flowers, salve and rouge and gave herself over to vows of mortification.[6]

1. Nedunal Vadai.
2. Do. ll. 41-42
3. Kuruntogai 218.
4. Aham 217.
5. Narrinai 42 Aham 104.
6. "Mahabharata-Vanaparva".

Though endowed with all the rights of a mistress, yet these women displayed a fine sense of delicacy. Their grief was not of the roaring type nor was their tone of the demonstrative type. The wife in her anxiety was asking her pet parrot whether he would come that day. Suddenly fearing that someone in the house might hear it and tease her, she covered it very cleverly by pretending to teach the parrot the art of speaking.[1] Just like this, another wife on knowing that her husband was about to leave her, came to him hugging his son and stood in silence with her eyes clouded with tears.[2]

**The sacrifice made by wives:** As soon as they were married they changed their youthful sportiveness and adapted themselves to the new home and its environment. They would sacrifice their own scruples. They would merge their personality entirely in that of their husbands. In Aham, we have the following example. A girl who was born and lived as the only daughter of a very wealthy parent and who lived a life of luxury married a very poor man and accompanied him to his small village. There she lived the life of a poor woman living in a tiny hut of grass. All that the couple could boast of as their property was the only cow tied to the only pillar of the hut.[3] Can the contrast be more picturesque? Another example we find in Narrinai is that of a girl who was born in great prosperity. As a child, her food consisted of milk and honey only. But even such delicacy she could be made to take only after a good deal of trouble and persuasion. Her foster-mother would even have often to threaten with a small stick: but the child was too naughty even for that. She would run hither or thither playing hide and

1. Aham.
2. Do.
3. Do. 369.

seek and making the foster-mother gasp her breath in chasing her. Such a girl was, in her married life, forced by the adversity of the husband to have only one frugal meal a day and she was perfectly content with that. Her parents were still affluent; yet she would not care to seek their help."[1] We find a similar example in princess Lopamudra, who, when she married the sage Agastya, served him in the garb of a rishipatni,[2] living a life of abstemiousness.

**The Angry wife**: It was not always that the woman could be a gentle patient wife. There were occasions she rose in revolt against him when he went astray. We get many examples of these angry wives in the Sangam literature.[3] Generally the prostitute was the thorn of her life. She with her charms noticed the hero using her inevitable tools the Panan and his wife Virali. The members of the household like the chariot driver, the brahmin and the husband's companion also were responsible for the disturbance, the peace of the home. Even menials like the dhobi woman played their part to worry the mistress of the house. It could not have been very pleasant to the wife if she were to be confronted by another of her sex who without any hesitation told her she was none other than her younger sister and added fuel to the fire saying that she, the latter, lived not far off from her own place.[4] Always the man would deny his guilt in the first instance by putting forth some false excuses saying that horse-riding, elephant-riding, cock-fight, etc., detainea him longer.[5] It was this deliberate falsehood that made the wife a Fury.

1. Narrinai 110.
2. Mahabharata III 97.
3. Kuruntogai 169; 202; 354. Narrnai 230-360.
4. Aham 386.
5. Marudakkali 170

In one case the wife gets exasperated by his wantonness and tells him that, as he is tired of her, he should take her to her father's house and leave her there and stop further humiliation.[1] She refused to listen to the words of conciliation. At times love had the upper hand. Then she became the target of the taunts of her maids. When the man returned from his wanderings, the wife received him with her usual smile Then the maids teased her with the following words: "Knowing his fault as you do, how could you welcome him so sweetly?" The wife answered thus, "he is a person who would feel embarrassed when praised; how then can he bear reproach?"[2] Such was the magnanmity of her love.

With all this the man's pursuit of illegitimate pleasure did not keep him away for long. He had to return home at the time of his wife's ritu. "Sexual union not from the fire of love, but only during the ritu is the old and holy rule for all the four castes too. which prevailed in the golden age; and great was the blessing."[3] Tolkappiar too says that the man could not be away from his home for more than fifteen days in a month, for the 12 days following the menstrual period has been considered to be the right time for conception.[4] King Uparicara was away in the woods hunting. "Spring had made its entry, and the trees were glorious with the splendour of their flowers and their weight of fruit; the kokilas sang their sweetest and all around the honey-drunken bees were humming. By love his soul was held but he could not see Girika (his wife).[5]

1. Kuruntogai 354.
2. Narrinai
3. Sexual Life in Ancient India p 219.
4. Tolkappiam Porul 187,
5. Sexual Life in Ancient India.

He knew she was in ritu. So he sent his seed through a falcon but unfortunately another falcon saw this and swooped on the former. They fought and the seed fell into the waters of Jamuna." Here we see how it was necessary for the husband to be with his wife during her ritu.

**The woman-lying-in**: In India, the primary duty of a woman was to bear children and thus continue the family lineage. The son was considered the means of salvation to the husband's ancestors. Great was the joy of the man when his wife bore him a son.[1] It was thought that by offering the sacrifices to the departed apirits, a man would release his ancestors from the bondage of the hell known as 'puth'. Child-birth was considered ceremonially unclean in many parts of the world. Among the Jews and other nations, for instance, in the Epistle of Jeremy while the prophet speaks of the iniquities of his people, he laments that "the menstruous woman and the woman in childbed touch their sacrifices". We hear the same in Leviticus also. In India, too, the woman in child-bed had been considered to be in pollution and believed to be always as such and is an easy prey to the evil spirits who prowl about watching for an opportunity.[2] She had to be guarded from such and mustard seed is thought to be an efficient exorciser to keep these spirits away. The Grihya-sutras give long accounts of precautions to be taken.[3] When Sita brought forth her twins the lying-in room was hung with white, luck-bringing wreaths; vessels filled with water stood everywhere towards the different quarters of the heavens and melted

1. Aham 6, 189 Kuruntogai 8, 359 Narrinai 390
2. Vishnupuranam Vol. IV p. 376
   Bhaghavathapuranam X 6
   Markandeyapuram 8,14,21-22. 64-65 77-80
3. Sexual Life in Ancient India, p. 397

butter, brands of tonduka wood, and mustard seeds".[1] In the Tamilian home also, mustard seed was sprinkled about while the mistress was lying-in.[2]

## THE SON

**Naming the son.** The son seems to have been named after the man's father, for he is invariably called the one bearing the name of the grand-father.[3] It is in vogue even to-day, among the South Indians. If the child does not bear the name of the household deity, he bears the name of his grandpa.

**Son as the joy of his parents.** Avvai aptly says that " though the child's prattle may not be musical nor have any sense in it, yet it fills the father with joy.[4] It is said also that only those who have not listened to the prattle of a child, that say that the music of flute and veena are sweet.[5] Another poet says that unbounded is the delight of the father when his child toddles up to him and grabs the meal, spilling some on the floor.[6] Madurai-k-Kanci praises mothers who have given birth to sons to be the delight of their husbands.[7]

**Son, as the peace-maker.** The son played another important part in his parents' life. When the unfaithful husband sought readmission at home, he used his son as the excuse when all the other sources of reconciliation had failed. He knew that it was an infallible method to succeed in his

1. Ramayana VII 66
2. Narrinai Vol. 370. Kuruntogai 287 Silappadikaram XI I227.
3. Kali-t-togai 81 Ainkurunuru 403 : Narrinai 40
4. Purana 92
5. Kural 66
6. do 64
7. Madurai-k-Kanchi ll. 600 " கணவா உவபபுதல வறபயத்த "

attempt. One instance of this kind is described thus: 'The child (son) was playing in the street. The father while going on his way to the house of his illicit love affair sees his son, alights from the carriage, takes him into the house. But the child would not part with him and begins to cry. The mother runs up and seeing that her son is coming in with his father thinks that he had obstructed the latter on his way and threatens him with a stick and orders him to leave his father alone. But the father would not allow the boy to be beaten and gives up his love affair. Another instance is when the husband returns from his roamings and takes the son into his arms, the wife gets frightened that he might carry the child away and so makes up with him.[2] Sons were therefore the olive branches of the house. This idea of children being the peacemakers of the household is expressed in the Psalm 128 of the Old Testament.

**The son as a means of salvation**: The son has been considered as a means of salvation both by the Aryan and the Dravidian communities in India.[3] Puram calls the son as the one giving sacrifices to the ancestors, dwelling in the Southern worlds (southern quarter was the dwelling place of Yama, the God of Death). There seems to have been a popular saying among the Tamil people that those fortunate parents, who won lasting fame in this as well as the next world by having a son were the most blessed.[4] Mahabharata XIII 68-34 also says "let a man wed and get sons; for in them there is a profit greater than any other profit." Therefore the highest benefit seems to be the possession of a son.[5]

1. Aham 66
2. Narrinai, 250.
3. Puram, 9.
4. Aham, 66 Kural 7-62.
5. Sexual Life in Ancient India, p. 151.

## CHAPTER VI

## THE WIDOW

**The Widow**: Dreary is the lot of a widow in Hindu society. The Sangam literature, like others, speaks of the pitiable condition of these women most touchingly. It has been emphasized again and again that the husband is all-important for the happiness of a woman. Bitter is therefore the sorrow experienced by a woman on whom widowhood falls. When her husband was killed Copperun Devi gave up her life in remorse saying that for a woman who has lost her husband there is nothing that could give consolation.[1] In Mahabaratha also it is said that " what the father gives has bounds ; so what the brother gives, so what the son gives. What woman then should not worship the giver of what knows no bounds—the husband."[2] In Ramayana we find that widowhood was considered as the greatest stroke of evil.[3]

**Observance by widows**: Among many, if not all the peoples of the world, the occurrence of death in the family has entailed on the survivors the obligations of observing certain customs, the general effect of which is to limit, in various directions, the liberty or personal conveniences enjoyed by persons in ordinary life. These restrictions varied in stringency and duration according to the degree of relationship with the deceased. The closer the relationship, the greater were the restrictions and for a longer period. The widow was by far the worst sufferer, as many of the privileges which she had enjoyed during her husband's lifetime were denied to her for the rest of her life.

1. Silappadikaram, XX 18-21.
2. Mahabharata, XII 148-2. (Sexual Life in Ancient India) p. 411.
3. Ramayana VII, 25-42.

**The shearing of hair by widows:** On the death of their husbands, women removed their hair. Purananuru tells us of widows shearing their hair as a sign of mourning.[1] In Puram 25 it speaks that women, after the death of their husbands, shore their hair as a sign of mourning. Again stanza 261 pities the condition of a widow, who owing to the death of her dauntless husband sheared her hair and removed her ornaments and was immersed in the grief of widowhood.

The custom of shearing the hair had been common in many ancient countries of the world. In ancient Israel the mourners testified their sorrow by shearing part of their hair.[2] Among the Semitic peoples the ancient Arabs practised this custom. This practice is in vogue even at the present day, for "if the deceased was a husband, a father, or other near relation, women cut off their long tresses and spread them out on the grave or wound them about the headstone"[3]. Similarly in ancient Greece women sheared their hair as a sign of mourning and their men also did it as a token of sorrow.[4] Among the Abyssinians it was customary to mourn the loss of any blood-relation by shearing their hair.[5] The Arapaho Indians unbraid their hair and cut it off; the greater their love for their departed friend, the more the hair they cut off.[6] The Calelareeze of Halmahara made an offering of their hair to the soul of a deceased relative on the third day after his or her death which was the day after burial.

1. Puram 25, 250, 261, 280.
2. Folklore in the Old Testament, Part IV, Ch. III, p. 377
3. ,, ,, ,, ,, 378
4. ,, ,, ,, ,, 379
5. ,, ,, ,, ,, 383
6. ,, ,, ,, ,, 385

Among many castes of India, it is found that, on the death of a person, his near relations shear their hair as a mark of mourning. It is done within ten days after the death.

There is no evidence in Tamil literature explaining the reason for this strange custom. Fortunately the explanation is furnished in another quarter. Sir J. G. Fraser, while discussing the reason for shearing locks as an offering for the dead, says, " still it is to be remembered that in the opinion of some peoples the hair is the special seat of its owner's strength and that accordingly in cutting their hair and presenting it to the dead they may have imagined that they were supplying him with a source of energy not less ample and certain than when they provided him with their blood to drink."[1] So it may be that even today women are found to offer their hair either of their own free will or by rule or custom to impart strength to the departed soul. Among the Hindus the son or the relative who discharges the obsequies shears his hair only once and that is during the ten days following the funeral. Most probably the widow in order to provide her deceased husband with perpetual strength removes her hair often. Widow as the life-partner of the deceased had to provide the sacrificial food balls or pindam to the spirit of the departed one. Puram gives the picture of a mourning wife washing the tomb-stone of her warrior with her fast flowing tears and placing the little balls of rice as offering to his spirit or soul.[2]

**Removing the ornaments**: Women, on the death of their husbands, removed all their ornaments and especially the bangles, which were the symbols of the married

1. Folklore in the Old Testament, Part IV, Ch. IV, p. 397.
2. Puram 246.

state. This is supported by Sangam literature. The widows were often referred to as the "women bereft of their ornaments". (கழிகல மகளிர்)[1]. As stated above the women were shorn of their hair as a mark of widowhood. Among Kutus and other tribes of Africa and Madagascar the widows observe mourning for three months. They shave their heads, strip themselves of all their ornaments, daub their bodies all over with white clay and pass the whole period in their house without speaking.[2]

**Food:** Either out of her own choice or of compulsion the widow could enjoy only a frugal meal at irregular intervals. The wife of Putha-pandian gives a graphic account of the life led by a widow. She says, 'O yea wise men: wise men of the state, instead of urging me on with smiles, ye, who are dissuading me from self-immolation be ye pleased to hear this. Do ye like to see me eat of the frugal meal of a widow consisting of nothing but a ball of rice mixed with white sesame powder and slices of striped fruits of melon seasoned with tamarind juice and spinach (வேளை); to sleep on rough floor with not even a mat. Alas, I am not of that type of mourner to continue to suffer it as an inevitable evil"[3]. She preferred death. Again it is often said that the stalk of the nymphea (அல்லி) formed the main article of food for widows.[4]

Women, who were left destitute by the death of their husbands, could earn their livelihood by manual labour and could live honourably like other independent persons. There were no trammels laid on this phase of their liberty.

1. Puram 280: 25: 224: 237: 238: 250: 261: 280
2. Folklore in the Old Testament, Part III, Ch. IX p. 343
3, Puram 246.
4. ,, 200, 248, 250

In Narrinai 353 we hear of widows spinning yarn to support themselves.[1]

The stringent rules relating to the life of widows seem to be of a later origin. Nowhere in the epics do we get evidence of any attempt being made to curtail the ordinary liberties of such women. Sangam literature as well as the epics breathe an air of free choice rather than compulsion in the case of observance of Suttee by widows. On the contrary, Mahanirvana Tantra strictly forbids a woman from destroying herself on a funeral pyre.[2] From the expansive text of Mahabharata only one instance of Suttee or burning of the wife is found. There too, it was out of the free will of the woman concerned. Madri, the younger wife of Pandu, chose to die with her husband so that she might reap the fruit of love, which had been denied to her during life.[3] Nowhere else do we find any instance of Suttee. Even with regard to the solitary instance referred to above some authors are inclined to think that it was a later interpolation. Ramayana, though it provides an ample scope for widow burning, furnishes but an isolated case of a brahman lady giving herself to be burnt on the funeral pyre of her husband in the regular Suttee style[4]. This cannot be taken as an authentic instance since the seventh book does not belong to the text proper of the epic. In the Tamil records also there is only one instance of self-immolation. The Queen of the Scion of Pandya scoffing at the idea of being the usual whining, plodding widow, chose to die with her husband by ascending the funeral pyre. Even here, we find that the elders of the State strove to their utmost to dissuade the frenzied woman. But her frenzy overcame their

1. Narrinai 353.
2. Mahanirvana Tantra, X 79-80 Translation by M.N. Dutt.
3. Mahabharata. I 125-40.
4. Ramayana, VII 17-14.

appeal and flinging at them a description of the pitiable lot of a widow, she burnt herself to avoid the degradation of being one.[1] The later and the more graceful instance of the choice of the wife, to die with her husband is found in the case of the queen of the Pandyan who unwillingly wronged the maid of Kaveripunpattinam. Here, Perumkopendu had no time to meditate on the lot of widows or the disgrace involved in being one. She knew that her husband was dead and that with him fled everything good. It was this realisation that deprived her of her life and not any consideration of the lot of widowhood. She collapsed at the feet of her dead husband.[2] She stood a trial at the altar of love and she chose to follow her love with no thought of any gain either material or spiritual.

Later on Suttee had come to be an established practice. It was chiefly the Rajputs, who in their zeal to preserve their family honour, enforced self-immolation on widows. At the time of Moghul supremacy in North India, it threatened to be a widespread menace and the State had to adopt measures, to stop it. Philanthropists like Akbar did everything to erase this practice of death by compulsion. But in South India, Suttee seems to have survived to very late times though it was always optional. On a slab set up in front of the ruined Soma Deva temple at Byadarahalli, an inscription of the time of Parakesari Varman *alias* Udaiyar Sri Virarajendra Deva is found the record of the self-immolation of a lady who entered the fire on the death of her husband.[3] The fact that this incident had been thought worthy of being recorded testifies to the rarity of the practice.

1. Puram 246.
2. Silappadikaram, XX, ll. 18-21.
3. M.E.R. 156 of 1906.

The belief seems to be that the relationship of husband and wife continued even after death in the case of true lovers. (குறுந்தொகை). Naturally the faithful wife would be anxious to join her husband in the other world immediately. Their chastity was so strong, that they could make the departed spirits of their husbands converse with them or bring them back to life. For instance, Kannagi insisted on Kovalan who was lying dead to speak at least one endearing word and he did answer.[1] Adimandi, the daughter of Karikalan, was inconsolable when she found her husband Attanatti, the dancer, washed away by the Kaveri.[2] She did not rest until he was restored to her. We have similar instances in the epics such as the story of Sulochana, the wife of Indrajit.

1. Silappadikaram XIX ll, 60-67.
2. Aham 222.

# CHAPTER VII

## THE PLACE OE VENAL LOVE

The woman of pleasure has always been woven into the fabric of human society, as a part of the social plan from the earliest times in the history of the world. The courtesan has always held a dominating influence not only on the social life of the individuals but also in the management of the State.[1] The institution has at various times of its existence been either encouraged or tolerated or controlled by laws and regulations, and public condemnation of it by civilised society has never been lacking. In India too courtesans held an important place in public life, principally on account of their proficiency in fine arts such as music and dancing.

It is often said, particularly by some western writers, that India still maintains the ancient connection between religion and prostitution. The so-called connection is sought to be established by the evidence of the Dravidian custom of the employment of Devadasis in the temples of South India. But nowhere in Tamil literature can be found any trace of the existence of a custom which might suggest a connection between religion and prostitution. The practice of dedicating girls to temples must have come into existenec in comparatively modern times. No doubt the institution of Devadasi has in course of time fallen into disgrace but the fact that some of them, or even most of them, take to prostitution in the course of their lives for the sake of livelihood should not imply that prostitution formed part of their religious duties, in the service of the temples.

1. Kautilya's Arthasastra.

Dravidian India is considered to have a close affinity with the eastern Mediterranean countries. Superficial critics generally formed incorrect and incomplete impressions of the customs of the Tamil country by studying them in the light of the customs prevailing in ancient times in the countries of the eastern Mediterranean such as Babylon, Syria, etc. Promiscuous love formed part of the worship of Asiatic goddesses like Mylitta and Astarte. In the Apocrypha (The Epistle of Jeremy-Baruch) it is said that "the women also with cords about them sit in the highways burning bran for incense; but if any of them drawn by some that passeth by, lie with him, she reproacheth her fellow that she was not thought as worthy as herself nor her cord broken". The commentator says, "we read of the prostitutes who sit in the ways with cords about them, until the cord is broken by a passer-by thereby to indicate his selection of a paramour." This practice is mentioned by Herodotus, Strabo and Lucian. Herodotus who gives the fullest description of this Babylonian custom mentions crowns of rope which the women wear on their heads and tells us that these rites were paid to the goddess, Mylitta, the Assyrian name for Aphrodite, *i.e.*, Ishtar, the consort of Tammuz. Strabo similarly mentions the rope worn on the head and connects the rite with a certain feast of Aphrodite. Lucian describes a similar ceremony as forming part of the mourning of Adonis (Tammuz) held at the temple of Aphrodite at Byblus and adds a detail which throws light on the chaplet of cord, *viz.*, that the prostitution is the penalty imposed on the women who refuse to shear their hair in token of mourning for the dead Adonis.

Again it is said, "that in Cyprus it appears that before marriage all women were formerly obliged by custom to

prostitute themselves to strangers at the sanctuary of the goddess Aphradili or Astarte. Similar customs prevailed in many parts of western Asia. Whatever its motive, the practice was clearly regarded, not as an orgy of lust but as a solemn religious duty performed in the service of that great Mother Goddess of western Asia whose name varied, while her type remained constant from place to place".[1]

It is highly probable that some of the above accounts of the customs of the Babylonians and other western Asiatic countries might be exaggerated or coloured versions recorded by zealous writers of the early Christian era. So far as Dravidian India is concerned, no demand seems to have ever been made on women to prostitute themselves as a religious duty. The connection between religion and prostitution seems to be a later gift to the Indian society brought about by some unknown influence. In the Ceded Districts when there is no male progeny it is the custom to dedicate the eldest girl to the temple. From that time onwards she is known as "Basavi" and enjoys all the freedom given to a son. She inherits the family property. She is free to choose her husband.[2] The practice of dedicating girls, to the temples, who subsequently resorted to prostitution as a profession, seems to have been the basis for the misconception in the minds of foreign critics. But an unbiassed study of the religions in India and the religious customs as evidenced in the available literature in South India cannot fail to dispel the idea that religion and prostitution went hand in hand.

**The Devadasis.** The identification of Devadasis or women, who undertake to serve in temples, with prostitutes

1. The Golden Bough (abridged) Ch. XXX pp 380.
2. Census Report of India, 1931, Vol. I Ch. III p. 236.

is entirely wrong. This confusion seems to be of a later development, for in the earlier literature we get the distinct idea that women who served in the temples did so either because they desired it or because they found security in the sanctuary. A rare instance is mentioned in Pattinapalai where in Kaverip-pum-pattinam the women, who were brought as spoils of war, had to tend the ever-burning lamps of the temple[1]. Again some of the inscriptions of Kulothunga III (1178-1218) record the fact of women selling themselves to the temple during famine. An inscription of Rajadhi-Raja records the sale of four women at the time of a famine for 700 kasus[2]. The famine of 1201 A.D. saw women selling themselves to the temple[3] In the 30th year of Kulothunga's reign one Vayiratha Rayar and his wife owned many slaves of either sex and they sold 36 of them to the temple and mutt after obtaining the permission of the State. The temple authorities had the sale inscribed.[4] M.E.R. No. 230-1912 is an inscription of the 49th year of Kulothunga I wherein Acca Pidaram Pallavarayan, a General of the King, is said to have assigned certain women of his family as "Devaradiyars" or temple servants devoted to the Tiruvallam temple and who were branded with trident mark (Sulam). Again the inscription at Sulamangalam records the sale of five female slaves by their owners to the temple[5]. The Kilayur Sasanam of 1182 A.D. gives a list of those who sold themselves to the temple to escape death by starvation[6].

It is clear from the above that up to to the twelfth century A.D. women were either given or sold to the temple

1. Pattinapalai ll.
2. M. E. R. 90 of 1926.
3. " 80 " 1913.
4. " 90 " 1926.
5. " 296 " 1911.
6. " 74 & 75 " 1925.

not for prostituting themselves, but for the service of the temple. If dedicating to the temple had been identical with taking up a life of prostitution, it is unbelievable that generals and men of high status would have given their kith and kin for it. Even in the Epics and Tantra literature it is only said that prostitutes were found in plenty in holy places. It is not said that the women who plied this trade were women attached to the service of the temple. Thus Meyer says: " As a matter of course and as is well known woman and piety go readily hand in hand and in this even the public kind of both of these is no exception. Thus the holy bathing places are often known not only as places for all kinds of love-making but also as places where light women ply their trade". So it is clear that in the early days the women who took up temple service were quite distinct from those who chose that place for their trade. It is obvious that when women undertook temple service it was because the temple offered them a refuge and not because they could earn easy money. How then did this misconception—the identification of the Devadasis with prostitutes—arise?

**The Temple Prostitute** : From very ancient times the temple in South India formed the centre of village administration. It was also the athenaeum where art was fostered and artistes exhibited their skill. During those times the art of dancing was the privilege of the Vesyas of the (parattai கணிகையர்) as they were called in Tamil. In his commentary on Sutra 149 of Tholkappiam Ilampuranar has defined the "parattai" as a woman skilled in music and dancing and in alluring wealthy men and lightening their purses.[1] So the word " parattai" can be said to be the synonym of 'harlot' or 'prostitute' in English. The women

1. Tolkappiam Porul 149. Ilaipuranar Commentary.

of pleasure found a place in the village activities as exponents of an art, dearly loved and cherished by the people. We find that it was not only desired but also imposed as a compulsion on harlots to dance during festivals[2].

That dancing was the art which appealed to the Tamil people most could be gathered from their worship of Shiva in the form of Nataraja or the King of Dancing. Silappadikaram has a whole chapter in Arangerru Kathai on the art of dancing and its technique. The vesyas or harlots, who, for the sake of their profession, had been nurturing this dearly loved art of the land, were given a place in the temple, and the temple god, Shiva the dancer, was considered to be not only their primary deity but also their Guru. In course of time, the presence and influence of the loose women who had entered the temple as artistes might have corrupted the pure service rendered by the "Servants of God" and the painful identification of the "Servants of God" with the ordinary harlot whose business it was to maintain the required standard in art, became possible. In later times, when the purpose of the temple had become a thing of bygones these temple-dancers found a new refuge, *i.e.*, the deity himself, whose favourite art they were required to cherish and develop. They instituted a mock marriage of the girls of the community with the deity and thereafter allowed them to ply their vicious trade. Most probably it is this later condition that has given rise to the ill-founded statement that in India religion and prostitution were interlocked. Tilakavathi the sister of Thirunavukkarasar, took up te
to serve God and not, from any monetary consideration. Would she have undertaken to serve in the temple if it had been for prostitution ? The women who temple

2. Manimekhalai II.

service did it of their own free will to secure for themselves a refuge and it was these women who were called the devadasis or devaradiyar, and not dancing girls of the temple.

Further, as the temples lost their significance as centres of village administration, the refugees found less and less chance of protection from the village public. It became easier for the harlots to pursue their trade without any impediment. Eventually the original devadasis or the "Servants of God" faded out leaving the dancing girls behind. But on no occasion were they anything but temple dancers. Even to-day the so-called devadasi is not supposed to clean the temple nor tend the lamps. She had only to dance before the idol. This is sufficient to show that devadasi is a misnomer to the temple-dancer, for the latter is and has been none but a descendant of the harlot, who had been employed in the temple only to foster art. That men and women were employed by the temple authorities for this purpose is shown by the inscriptions of Kulottunga III. Otherwise it is difficult to furnish from the literature a plausible explanation for the confusion between the two different classes of women. Both were in the service of the temple, but one was the paid servant, whereas the other was a voluntary devotee. Gradually the place of the voluntary servant had been taken over by the paid one and the word "Servant of God" or Devadasi came to be applied to the latter.

**Concubinage as different from Prostitution:** Concubinage has been defined in English 'as an inferior state of marriage' and concubines as 'secondary wives'[1]. These concubines have always been distinguished in law and custom from prostitutes or harlots. Manu has

1. Encyclopaedia Britannica—Prostitution.

apportioned a definite status for these women, who were married by men of other three castes[1]. Yagnavalkya (Chapter III, 12 and 13) says, "Three, two and one are respectively the wives of a Brahman, Kshatriya and Vaishya; of one descended from a Shudra, only one of his own class (of course this is reprobated in the Kali Yuga). Even Brihaspati is willing to recognise and give a status to the woman who was married by the man (Brihas. XXV. 32.) The four castes of Aryan society were well known and to a certain extent accepted by the Tamils of the Sangam age. The distinction though not severe was not unknown. The possibility of inter-marriage could not have been remote and therefore it necessitated the members of the Tamil society also to give the proper place to these women who, though inferior in caste, were yet wives. Justice demanded that they should be given a status, though not the same as the one granted to the woman who had been married legally with the sanction of the society. Therefore, this kind of union came to be differentiated from prostitution and promiscuous unchastity for gain. Ilampuranar while defining the term "Kamak-Kilattiyar" meaning literally "woman of love" classifies them under 3 heads, viz., (1) women, who belonged to the same caste as the men whom they married later, (2) women belonging to a lower caste, and (3) regular harlots who were married and given conjugal rights.[2] It is clear that the commentator, while drawing these distinctions, had in his mind the rules made by Manu and Yagnavalkya regarding the maintenance of the concubines and inheritance by their sons. But the other commentator Nachchinarkiniar would not accept this interpretation for the word "Kama-k-kilattiyar". He

1. Manu, IX, 155.
2. Tholkappiam 149.

would maintain that the term would only mean those prostitutes whe were married after a certain period of their life and were given the rights of a home. The term "Kama-k-kilattiyar enveloped within its expansive folds wives by an inferior kind of marriage in contrast to "Kama-k-kilatti or the mistress of the house who alone shared the honours of the family. Even the harlots who were married and given the rights of a home enjoyed this privilege of being included among Kama-k-kilatiyars. There is nothing incongruous in the explanation rendered by the learned commentator, Ilampuranar. It fits in with the idea prevalent among other peoples of the world. In Greece also there seems to have been some distinction between hetarae, who were regular harlots, and mistresses who were probably secondary wives.

**The Harlots who were married** : Narrinai (330) tells us of the case where a prostitute was married by the man and given the rights of a home. The wife, in rebuking the husband, points out to him that though he had married the parattai and thus raised her to the status of a wife, it would be impossible for him to make her change her true colours and even more impossible to make her be contented to lead the hum-drum life of a wife, bearing children and cherishing an unbroken, unselfish love for her husband. There are plenty of instances where these women were not only married but were accepted by the wives as co-wives. The parattai saw the lonely son of her lord playing alone in the street. Seeing no one about, she hugged him and caressed him. The mother approached her and she became embarrased. "Oh thou with faultless limbs, why art thou embarrassed? You are also his mother: so play with him without any fear"[1] It was not always that the

1. Aham 16

parattai had to be told that she was related to the wife by a common tie. Where her claims were ignored, she took steps to establish them. We hear of a parattai married by a man, stepping up to the wife and saying with cool impudence "I am none other than your sister and I live close to you."[1] In many instances they were regarded by the wives themselves,[2] as the step-mothers of their children.

**Classfication of Harlots**: Prostitutes are classified in Sangam literature under two groups, viz., those who were married and those who lived a free life. Mahanirvana Tantra classifies them under five groups:

1. Raja Vesya (The harlot of the rulers).
2. Nagari (the city harlot).
3. Gupta Vesya (the secret harlot or woman of good family who secretly follows this calling).
4. Deva-Vesya (the harlot of the temple or temple-dancer).
5. Brahma Vesya (the harlot of the bathing places). The Amaram mentions several kinds.[3] Some of them are:—

1. Varastri, the ordinary prostitute.
2. Ganika, the associate of libertines and the confidant of the richest amongst them.
3. Veci—one who shines on the stage.
4. Rupa-Jiva— one living by her personal charms.
5. Vara-mukhya—the chief among Vesyas.
6. Kuttani.
7. Sambali.

1. Aham 386
2. Marudakkali 82-83-84
3. Manushyavarga II (18-19.

Of the two kinds of classification (Tamil and Sanskrit) Ilampuranar's is more advanced. It takes into consideration not only the types of prostitutes classified according to the station of their patrons, but also the differentiation between the one pursuing it as a normal vocation and the one who had undertaken the duties of a married wife.

**The Harlot, a necessity of Social Life** : That these harlots formed an integral part of the social life of a city and that they were a class by themselves, an evil, yet a necessary part of urban life are clear from the Epics and Sangam literature. The term 'Nagari' supports this view It is said that, in a model city, the prostitutes must dwell in the southern quarter of the city which is supposed to be the abode of Yama, the God of death.[1] Silappadikaram also places the dwelling of the social outcastes or Kadai Kali Mahalir as they were called in the outskirts of Madura.[2] Kovalan, determined to turn a new leaf, came to Madura with his wife.[3] He left her in charge of the friendly Madari and went forward to the flourishing city of the Pandyas to seek his fortune. There he had to pass with a non-chalant air the grim looking yavanas, guarding the gates of the city. As he passed them safely, he came to the quarters of the women whose trade it was to draw the fiery eyes and hearts of men and above all their wallets. According to ancient Greek law, the dicteria or the houses of prostitutes which were a state monopoly were confined to certain quarters of the city of Athens. But unlike the Greek dicteriades, the parattaiyar of Tamil land could visit even the superior quarters of the city without the least restriction.

1. Agnipurana 106-7.
2. Silappadikaram, 188-225.
3. Do. XIV 148-167.

**The Dress of the Harlots**: The strumpets had to wear red dress to distinguish themselves from the other women. Mahabharata allots red as the colour of the abhisaricas; for red colour denotes the god of death and execution.[1] Ramayana, speaking of the celestial hetarea going to their hour of dalliance, describes them as wearing, red, being the colour assigned to their earthly sisters.[2] In Rome, the prostitutes were bound by law to wear a distinctive dress and dye their hair yellow or to wear yellow wigs.[3] Greece also gave them a particular dress to wear.[4] In France they could not wear any fine stuff and had to provide themselves with a badge.[5] Such badges, either of colour or of dress, seem to have been foreign to the Tamilian society. Still a suggestion of red being the badge of harlots is given in a passage of Silappadikaram. "Kovalan entered the street where women of the lowest strata plied their trade and had their dwelling. The flags in the streets were fluttering in the gentle eastern breeze. The women of pleasure with their opulent partners were lounging in the moon-flooded terraces of their mansions, listening to the fine, smooth flattery of their lovers. These beautiful women wore flimsy red silks round their slim waists. Their hair was set off by the crimson flowers of Kutacam (குடசம்). Wreaths of scarlet, Kutalam (கூதாளம்) woven with Kutacam, adorned their locks. They had painted their breasts with the colour of kumkum. Round their necks, made beautiful by the red, fragrant powder, were garlands made of the red flowers of Koduveri. With bands of corals round their waists, they seemed to be the hand-maids of Kudal dressed in red to welcome the lord of winter".[6] "From

1. Mahabharata. VIII, 94-26.
2. Ramayana, IV, 24.34.
3, 4 & 5. Encyclopaedia Britannica—Prostitution.
6. Silappadikaram. XIV, 65-97.

the above passage it is unmistakably clear that the colour red was that prescribed for the prostitutes. Nowhere else, has the author brought out the colour scheme so elaborately. Mahabharata (viii 94·26) says that an 'abhisarika' wears a red garment, a red wreath, red gold. Dasacumara Caritam also testifies to this.[1]

**The Price for a Harlot:** A nominal price had to be paid by the man wishing to secure the services of a harlot. Madhavi danced before the Chola court, on the day of her initiation. "The King, being pleased with her extraordinary skill, presented her with 1008 pieces of gold, of adagam variety. After leaving the court the maids of the dancing girl took a garland of hers with them crying that he, who could pay 1008 pieces of gold, could secure the services of the enchanting Madhavi. Kovalan paid the required amount and was led to Madhavi".[2] Paripadal also talks of a price being paid to a harlot.[3] The harlot calls the man, as the one who had given her the price of a garland. Narrinai 150 also makes a faint suggestion of a price being paid to a harlot by her man.

**The Accessories of the Strumpet:** The harlots had their own adherents who were made use of in their profession. The Kama-Sutras of Vatsyayana mentions the following as being essential to a harlot:

(1) Washer-woman (2) the barber (3) the flowerman (4) the dealer in scents (5) the vendor of wines (6) the mendicant (7) the cowherd (8) the supplier of betel-leaves (9) the goldsmith (10) the story-teller (11) the pimp (12) the buffoon (13) the astrologer (14) the female artisan and (15) a widow.[4]

1. Daca Kumara Charitam, p. 57.
2. Silappadikaram, 111, 160, 175.
3. Paripadal 20.
4. Kama Kala by Lal Kanoomal, p. 24.

Of these fifteen used by the harlot of North India only three seem to have been useful to her sister in the profession in the South. The washer-woman, the story-teller, who may be compared to the Panan, and the female artiste have been indispensable to the parattai. They were the tools with which she fastened her nails on her victim. There are many instances where the enraged wife flings abuses at these low types of persons. The panan (story-teller) and the dancer had the worst of it at the wife's hands. One dame called him a fool.[1] Another requests the potter, who was the announcer of festivals, to tell the guileless mothers of the hidden poison of the panan's words.[2] The panan was not the only one that disturbed the peace of a home. The chariot-driver[3], the man's friend[4] and the Brahmin had also a share in it.[5] The washer-woman also seems to have been an accomplice.[6]

The female artiste or virali, as she was called in Tamil, was, by convention, the wife of the panan. The panan and virali were, in some cases, itinerant artistes, the man playing on the instruments and the woman dancing. Some of them seem to have been household servants, panan attached to the man and virali invariably to the harlot. Virali was hated like poison by all housewives. In a particular instance the wife took her husband away by force, dreading the influence of the virali.[7] In another place the virali was called " the female vendor of women. "[8]

1. Marudakkali 70, 71, 75, 93, 98; Aham, 56
2. Narrinai 300, 310; Ainkurunur, 49
   ,, 200
3. Marudakkali 71
4. ,, 71
5. ,, 72
6. ,, 72
7. Narrinai 170
   ,, 310

**The Harlots taking part in Social Functions such as Festivals:** The strumpet with her distinctive dress and dwelling was not denied any civil rights by the society. She had been even considered by the Aryans as an auspicious object on important festive days. In South India, the harlots were not subjected to any civil disabilites as in ancient Babylon or France. They could freely visit any part of the city and take part in any public function of the State, such as festivals. They were given all the privileges of an ordinary citizen. There are many instances of the parattai accompanying her man to the festivals. She could go with him to the festival of Kama Vel or Manmatha,[1] to play on the sands of Vaigai[2] or revel in the joy of spring in the groves of Madura.[3] The parattai could even partake the rejoicings on the rising of Vaigai, as could any one else. She even prided herself on these occasions, of her power over men as could be seen from the sixth stanza in Paripadal.[4] Madhavi accompanied Kovalan to the banks of the Kaveri during the Indra festival.[5] No stigma adhered to them. The badge of their profession did not affect their -rights as citizens. Mahabharata, too, in many places mentions the Vesyas as being ornaments to the festivals, escorts of honour and attendants upon important guests. They were on the whole considered as a necessity of social life, accompanying men in war, hunt and in other diversions.

**The Freedom given to the Harlots to choose their Lot:** It is not often that these women of pleasure took to the married state seriously. There are a few

1. Palai-K-Kali 27
2. ,, 29 (13-16)
3. ,, 27
4. Paripadal 6, 16, 20
5. Silappadigaram III

instances where they choose to abandon their lives of frivolity and be faithful to one man. Madhavi was one of those who donned the weeds of a widow on the death of her lover. Manimakhalai undertook to lead an ascetic's austere life even at a very tender age. She seems to have loathed the miserable life led by the women of her class. She calls the life of a prostitute as a wicked one having nothing in it except wine, falsity, promiscuity murder, insincerity and all the other sins shunned by persons of honour![1] But there were not many of Manimekalai's type. Some even boasted of their power over men and their ability to make the wives miserable. One brags that she could make her man follow her abjectively as nerinchi flowers follow the sun![2] Again, another says that if she only wished, she could snatch him away like the Kaveri who snatched Attanatti, the husband of Adimandi[3]? The third seems to have been typical of her class. She rejoices in her ability to make her man's wife miserable. She says to her maid "if the wife resents my acquaintance with her husband, then come with me for a short stroll. We shall walk in front of her door, with our bracelets jingling and making the wife beat her stomach, as the panan beats the drum.[4]"

**The Harlot given the Freedem to choose a Life of Love**: A life of love could be chosen by the prostitute, if she desired to do so. No restriction was laid on her by society nor was there any stigma left on her by her profession. Even as late as 12th Century A.D. some of the dancing girls preferred to marry and settle down to a life

1. Manimekhalai XXIV. 72, 79, III, 43—48 XVIII 11—15.
2. Kuruntogai, 315.
3. Aham, 76
4. ,, 106

of peace, and their marriage was sanctioned by society and State. In the front gopuram of the Somanatheswara temple at Achyutamangalam, Nannilam, Tanjore district, is an inscription of Kulottunga III recording the marriage of a dancing girl attached to the temple;[1] Again at the time of Rajaraja II, the dancing girl named Catural Catiri (சதுரான் சதுரி) had been mentioned as the wife of one dancer Nagan Kadan in the inscription at Thiruvorriyur.[2] So it was that in later times as in the earlier, these women could marry and live, as anybody else. Unlike these, their sisters in France, when once registered as such, could not go back.

**Condemnation of Public Women**: Though the woman of pleasure had been considered as a necessary appendage of society, yet she had never been approved by the wise men. From the epic days onwards, she had been condemned as the abode of evil. Many are the warnings uttered against her viles. At Athens, the regulations of Solon were designed to preserve public order and decency. Among the ancient Romans, it was considered disgraceful for a man to frequent the society of prostitutes. Jeremy, the prophet of Jerusalem, has raised his voice in indignation against a harlot.[3] Many are the exhortations found in Mahabharata against this evil. Valluvar, the sage of the Tamil land, has a chapter on these women. He calls them 'women of duplicity' (for while they love, they pilfer).[4] He declares strongly that he, who associates with them, could be none but one deserted by Fortune.[5] These women had always been associated with

1. M.E.R. 411 of 1925.
2. M.E.R, 147 of 1912.
3. The Epistle of Jeremy (Apocrypha).
4. Thirukkural 73, stanza 920.
5. Do.

drink and dice, for they were all evils of the same intensity. Parimelalakar, in his commentary' says that it was the same thing with Sanskrit writers also and they called these three sistersins as " Vithana."[1] Valluvar's words seem to echo the saying in Mahabharata. There the ruler is sharply told that " drinking-halls and strumpets, as also traders and mimes and gamblers and others like them—all these are to be held in check as harmful to the kingdom. Where they set their feet fast in the kingdom, they are an infliction for honest subiects."[2] It was not only the prophets and wise men who loathed this vicious institution but even members of the same hated it, as did Manimekhalai. In the light of these evidences, it cannot still be said that in India religion and prostitution were connected. It was tolerated because it had to be. Those of them that needed the protection of the society were given it ; they could do things as the other women. One courtezan set up the images of Periya Devar and Nachchiyar at the Seshapuri Isvarar temple at Tiruppamburam and gained some privileges thereby [3] The choice was theirs to elevate or deteriorate themselves, as they would and if they did the latter, the men who patronised them were also condemned by the public.

1. Parimalakar's commentary (Kamantakam 11-124).
2. Mahabharata 9.
3. M. E. R. 92 & 94 of 1911.

## CHAPTER VIII

## FESTIVALS

Festivals were great occasions of public rejoicings in the Tamil Country. They often provided chances for the subjects to come into contact with their rulers. Rich and poor alike took part in these celebrations. Men and women freely mingled in the rejoicings in the most perfect social spirit.

The festival of rising of the rivers, Indra Vila of the Chola land, the festival at the hill of Tiruparakunram, Palguni Vila and Karthigai Vila, were some of the principal festivals in the Tamil land.

The rising of rivers especially that of the Vaigai of Pandyan country and the Kaveri of the Chola land were hailed with great enthusiasm by the people. Rivers were the chief sources of water supply to the agriculturist of the Tamil land. As in the other early societies of the world, the king in the Tamil land was held responsibile for bringing rainfall and prosperity to his kingdom.

It is interesting to note how in many parts of the world the king was supposed to be the rain-maker. Blame for the absence of rains and the consequent failure of crops was almost invariably laid at his door. " In some parts of West Africa, when prayers and offerings presented to the king have failed to procure rain, his subjects bind him with ropes and take him by force to the grave of his forefathers that he may obtain from them the needed rain."[1] Manu describes the benefits of a good reign as follows : " In that country where the king avoids taking the property of mortal sinners, men are born in due time and are long lived.

1. The Golden Bough (Abridged) p. 86.

And the crops of the husbandmen spring up, each as it was sown and the children die not and no misshapen off-spring is born."[1] Valluvar, the great ethical teacher of the Tamil land, in his own crisp manner says that " the land which is not ruled justly will lose its fertility; the men of 'six duties' (brahmins) will lose their knowledge."

> " முறை கோடி மன்னவன் செய்யி னுறை கோடி
> யொல்லாது வானம் பெயல் "
> " ஆபயன் குன்று மறு தொழிலோர் நூன்மறப்பர்
> காவலன் காவா னெனின் " (குறள்) 560.

Throughout the ages kings have been considered to be responsible for causing rainfall and agricultural prosperity. Rivers being the main sources of water supply, kings sought to maintain an unbreakable connection with them by treating them as their brides. " In the legend of the nuptials of Numa and Egeria we have a reminiscence of a sacred marriage which the old Roman kings regularly contracted with the goddess of vegetation and water for the purpose of enabling him to discharge his divine or magical function."[2] We have no such definite information that the three kings of the Tamil land underwent the formality of any marriage with the rivers; but there is a slight evidence to show that the Vaigai and the Kaveri were held as the brides of the Pandya and Chola Kings, respectively.[3]

The river was always regarded as the chief ornament of the country.

Avvai, the beloved poetess of South India, says that a city without a river is devoid of beauty. (ஆறில்லா ஊருக் கழகு பாழ்.) Paripadal, an anthology belonging to Ettuthoka

1. The Golden Bough (abridged) p. 89.
2. ,, ,, p. 147.
3. Silappadikaram, Kanalvari.

collection has 26 pieces in praise of the Vaigai, the river of the Pandyas.

"திருமாற் கிருநான்கு செவ்வேட்கு முப்பத்
தொருபாட் டுக்காடுகாட் கொன்று — மருவினிய
வையையிரு பத்தாறு மாமதுரை நான்கென்ப
செய்யபரி பாடற்றிறம்"

Such is the importance of rivers and it is no wonder that the Tamil people regarded the rising of rivers as important occasions of public rejoicing.

In the following is described how the people of Madura celebrated the rising of the Vaigai:

"The Vaigai was overflowing her banks. A joyous shout was sent up by the populace. The entire city of Madura was ringing with the cry Vaigai in spate, come and see the glorious sight. Men and women, old and young ran pellmell to witness it. Some went in chariots: some on elephants which stood gazing at their sculptured mates Some carried teral (wine) and ahil (aegilia) to dry their wet tresses. Many carried with them little offerings of golden fish and flowers".[1] "The cutting of dams and admission of the water into the canals and fields, is a great event in the Egyptian year. At Cairo, the operation generally takes place between the sixth and sixteenth of August and till lately was attended by ceremonies which deserve to be noticed, because they were probably handed down from antiquity". "Tradition runs that the old custom was to deck a young virgin in gay apparel and throw her into the river as a sacrifice to obtain a plentiful inundation. Whether that was so or not, the intention of the practice appears to have been to marry the river, conceived as a male power, to his bride, the corn land which

1. Paripadal 6 (11-15)

was so soon to be fertilised by his waters. The ceremony was therefore a charm to ensure the growth of the crops. In modern times money used to be thrown in the canal on this occasion and the populace dived into the water after it. This practice also would seem to have been ancient: for Seneca tells us that at a place called the 'Veins of the Nile' not far from Philae, the priests used to cast money and offerings of gold into the river at a festival which apparently took place at the rising of the water."[1] So also the Tamilians propitiated the rising river by throwing gold fish, coins and other valuables into its water.

> " புனைகபூ, அவிபாா பாதனை யபூல்பல யேந்தி
> நகையபர் காதலவரை நாளணிக் கூட்டும்
> வகை சாலும் வையை வரவு (பரிபாடல் 6. 11-15)

The same is expressed in Kasi-K-Khandam 27:6. Even to this day, on the 18th of Adi, when the river Kaveri is in spate men and women worship her with flowers and money. Pilgrims worshipping the sacred rivers like the Ganges and the Brahmaputra throw coins into them as offerings.

Just as the Pandyan kingdom welcomed the rising of the Vaigai the Cholas hailed the freshes of the Kaveri. Aham 376 shows that these festivals were invariably the occasions when the subjcts could come into contact with their rulers, for the kings evinced a lively interest in the conduct of the festivals and took care to see that the citizens were provided with as much amusement as possible. Public performances such as dancing were arranged by them in order that the citizens might rejoice. In Aham 222 we have the evidence that Karikal, the well-known Chola King, was delighted with the skilful performance of the dancer Attanatti at Kalar harbour, when the Kaveri rose in floods.

1. The Golden Bough. Part, IV. Vol II.

The Indra Vila or Indra's festival was another occasion for general rejoicing especially in the Chola kingdom. The author of Manimekhalai tells us that in memory of some service rendered to a Chola king by Indra, the monarch requested him to accept a festival, and Indra did so. From that time onwards every Chola monarch celebrated this festival[1]. It was celebrated not only in the Tamil land but also in the other parts of India The great Sanskrit poet Kalidas describes this in detail in his Raghuvamsa[2]. Indra was worshipped as the God of Thunder and Lord of Celestials. Nachchinarkiniyar in his commentary on Sutram 5 of Ahattinal Iyal, says that as Indra was the Lord of Celestials and Lord of Thunder the people of Marudam or urban areas worshipped him as their deity, and that in the festival which they celebrated for him, He would himself take part. It is interesting to note that Parjanya is one of the many names given to Indra and it has been said "He is a god who presides over lightning, thunder, rain and procreation of plants and living beings." But it is by no means clear whether he was originally the god of rain or god of thunder. But, as these two phenomena are always associated together in this country, either of the two ideas is admissible. The Tamils seem to have regarded him as the god of thunder.

In many countries of the world the god of rain and thunder was worshipped. It is said that among "the ancient Teutons as among the Greeks and Italians the god of the oak was also the god of thunder. Moreover, he was regarded as the great fertilising power, who sent rain and caused the earth to bear fruit,[3] for Adam of Bremen tells us that 'Thor presides in the air; he it is who rules thun-

1. Silappadikaram Ch. IV.
2. Raghuvamsa, Canto
3. The Golden Bough, Part I, Vol. II.

der and lightning, wind and rains, fine weather and crops. In these respects therefore the Teutonic thunder-god resembled his southern counterparts Zeus and Jupiter. And like them Thor appears to have been the chief god of the Pantheon: for in the great temple at Upsala his image occupied the middle place between the images of Odin and Frey and in oaths by this or other Norse trinities he was always the principal deity invoked." [1]

In the vedic sacrifices Indra or Parjanya, the thunder god, was one of the chief deities invoked. He was also the chief god of the Pantheon outside the Trinity. Whether it is through the influence of the Aryans or independently, the Tamilians came to regard him as one of the presiding deities of their urban life, *i.e.*, Marudam.[2] It was therefore quite natural that they should celebrate a festival in his honour and propitiate him. But what is the signification of the legend of the king helped by Indra? Here the Greek legend gives the clue to determine the nature of the service rendered by Indra to the Chola king. On the far-seen peak of Aegina, the pan-hellenian Zeus was worshipped. "Once when all Greece was parched with drought, envoys assembled in Aegina from every quarter and entreated Aeacus, the king of the Island, that he should intercede with his father Zeus for rain. The king complied with the request and by sacrifices and prayers wrung the needed showers from his Sire, the Sky-God"[3]. So it might have been with the Chola monarch. We have already seen how it was incumbent on the king to maintain fair weather, seasonal rains and fertility of the soil. Therefore at a time, when the said Chola monarch was in danger of losing his reputation, Indra might have sent down showers to revive

1. The Golden Bough, Part I, Vol. II.
2. Tolkappiam Porul 5.
3. The Golden Bough, Part I, Vol. II.

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the parched land. The king in his gratitude might have instituted an annual festival for the benefactor. Whatever be the origin of the festival, it was held in great solemnity and amidst great rejoicings.[1] Silappadikaram says that the whole city of Kaveripumpattinam entered into the spirit of the festival. It was celebrated on the full-moon day of the month of Chittirai. Every one took an active part in making it a great success. Royal criers, seated on gigantic elephants, proclaimed the date of the festival. Every house in the city was decorated as befitting the occasion. All public places were decorated by the State. Offerings were given to the many guardian deities of the city. The dancing girls were required to give recitals of their art, so that the public might see and enjoy. If they failed, they were reproved by their patrons, *i.e.*, the public.[2] The Chola king set up a club resembling the Vajra of Indra. His vassals brought the waters of the Kaveri, in golden pots reverentially carrying them for bathing it. Ainkurunuru (62) has a reference to the thronging of maidens at the places of celebration of the Indra Vila. Mahabharata says that a pole, consecrated and decorated with flowers, was set up in the village-common with the flag of Indra hoisted from it[3]. Most probably this was symbolic of Indra.

In his book "Sexual Life in Ancient India" Meyer says "the favourite festival of Indra or Indra's banner is often mentioned in the epic". Mahabharata describes how the king Uparicara founded this joyous festival and first held it. The standard was set up seven days before the full moon of the month of Acvina (Sep-Oct), waved day after day in all its glory and then on the day of

1. Silappadikaram—Indra Vila Uredutta Kathai.
2. Manimekhalai—Vila Varai Kathai.
3. Mahabharata I 63-17.

the full moon was thrown on the ground. Before this it had been held aloft by cords."[1]

Meyer says that the Karm festival of Urava is something akin to this. "Both, anyhow, are fertility festivals, as are the well-known May-tree festivals".[2]

**Seasonal Festivals—Spring.** The advent of Spring has always been an occasion of rejoicing in many countries of the world. Spring is the time when the earth wakes from her winter sleep and all the trees and flowers begin to smile at their host, the Sun. The sight of the fresh green in the thicket, of vernal flowers blowing on mossy banks, of cuckoos cooing in the boughs was welcomed by young and old alike. The spring with its new life gave rejuvenating pleasure to the old; a reciprocal joy to the young. It is the latter who drink at the fountain of spring.

The Bihu festival in Assam is known as Bohag-Bihu or Spring festival and New Year. A writer says "This Bihu is the outward expression of joy of man at the advent of Spring. The approach of the Bohag-Bihu is heralded from long before by nature and its agencies. Assam everywhere is rich in natural beauty. At this season of the year, Assam is a verdant and smiling land. Fresh green leaves on the trees, countless beautiful flowers in blossom on all sides, innumerable ministrel birds with their sweet, moving songs, and mid-day raging blasts blowing away dust and the last vestiges of dry leaves, all herald the advent of Spring and the coming of Bohag-Bihu. On the advent of Spring, nature in its abundance has transformed the earth

1. Yagnavallkya 1-147; Agnipuranam 121-65; Brihatsamhita 43.
2. Sexual Life in Ancient India, p. 283.

and soft and newer atmosphere around doubtless has its influence on human breasts ".[1]

In ancient Tamil land the Spring also brought with it the breath of love, and the festival of the Spring was associated with Kaman or Cupid. It was called Kaman Vilavu or Villavan Vilavu. But to-day what is called Kaman Vila or Kaman Pandigai has a different significance. It is a commemoration of the burning of Kaman or Manmatha. This Kaman Vila or Holi, as it is called in common parlance, is a very important festival of North India. It is celebrated in some parts of the South also, though not so systematically. In the North the festival commences on the day of the full-moon in March. *ie.*, Phalguna Sudha Pournima, according to the Chandramana calculation and lasts for four days (two days prior to the full-moon day and one day after it). There is a tradition about this. Daksha, the father-in-law of Shiva, insulted Dakshayani, his daughter and consort of Shiva, by his callous indifference. Dakshayani was enraged at it and threw herself into the sacrificial fire. Thereupon, Shiva created the warrior Virabhadra to destroy Daksha. Despite the superior strength of his opponent, Virabhadra destroyed Daksha and his Yagna (the sacrifice). Shiva (the Lord of Destruction) took to meditation. The world was at a stand-still, and there was no creation. The devas requested Manmatha, the Lord of Love, to draw Shiva away from His meditation with his infallible weapons, arrows of flowers, parrot and sugar-cane bow. Manmatha did their bidding at the cost of his life ; for, Shiva enraged at the audacity of Manmatha, opened his third eye which shot out a flame that reduced the Lord of Love to a heap of ashes. But Rathi, the wife of Manmatha, was inconsolable. Shiva could not bear to see the grief-stricken daughter

1. Bihu Festival in Assam (Indian Review).

of His. So Manmatha was recalled to life, but he was to be without his body except to his wife Rathi to whom alone he would be visible.

**The Various Rites Observed:** The Gujaratis and Marwaris observe the festival by setting up a common altar on the full-moon day. Cocoanuts and other things are thrown into fire to represent the stricken god, Manmatha. The Mahrattas perform this in their own houses. After the burning, a great feast is held. As a rule all these communities go out in a procession singing songs specially intended for the occasion. On the second day or after some days as the custom may be, the procession returns with joyous song, and coloured water, especially of red colour, is sprayed from a squirt on the members of the community irrespective of sex and position. The reddish water is supposed to represent the blood of Manmatha. But contemporary evidence goes to discredit this idea. In an article entitled the Scatalogic Rites of all Nations, it is stated that "the people of Rangoon, Siam, etc., have a peculiar usage at the time of their New Year. Every man, woman, boy or girl is armed with a 'squirt gun' with which all people in the street are drenched."[1] Again, Encyclopaedia Britannica on April Fool's Day—Holi, says "on the Sunday and Monday preceding Lent, people are privileged to play the fool: it is thought very jocose to pour water on any person who passes or throw powder on his face."[2] Of course the colour of the powder or water is not given but the idea of the drenching seems to be that it indicates joy more than anything else. In Paripadal 16 it is said that water, coloured red was squirted in sheer fun. When the Vaigai was in freshes, the maids enjoyed themselves by throwing water,

1. Scatalogic Rites of All Nations — Indian Review.
2. Encyclopaedia Britannica: April Fool's Day.

coloured red, on each other. Here the colour 'red' did not carry any particular significance. Moreover, R. Patterson in his "Asiatic Researches", Calcutta 1805, Vol. III p. 78, says that a contributor to the journal calls this powder purple and claims that the idea is to represent the return of the Spring which the Romans call "purple".

In Ṭamil literature we do not have any reference to the religious significance of the Kaman festival. It seems to have been invariably connected and associated with spring, for, wherever they say something connected with spring they call it "the time of Kaman Vila". The months of Chitrai and Vaigasi are the months of 'Ilavenil' or spring and it was during these months that the festival of Kaman was held. It was the time when the cuckoos sang their best songs, when the boughs bowed down with their blossoms, when the hearts were merry and mirth ran high. So most probably they associated the festival for Kaman or the God of Love with spring, the time of merry-making. Today in some parts of South India, such as Salem and Coimbatore, Kaman festival is celebrated more or less in the same fashion as in North India. An altar is raised in the village common, and for more than ten days there is a general mourning. On the full-moon day the altar is set fire to and sugar-canes are thrown into the fire most probably because they are supposed to represent the bow of Manmatha. The following day there is great rejoicing and two men dressed as Manmatha and Rathi go round collecting money. The festival is celebrated on the full-moon day of the month of Phalguni.

The myth of Manmatha has a close analogy with that of Adonis. "The spectacle of the great changes which annually pass over the phase of the earth, has powerfully impressed the minds of men in all ages and stirred them to

meditate on the causes of transformations so vast and wonderful." Quite naturally they attributed the growth and decay of vegetation to be the effects of the waxing or waning strength of the gods and goddesses. So it is that the eastern Mediterranean countries worshipped Adonis in a way similar to that of the worship of Manmatha in India. "Nowhere, apparently have these rites been more widely and solemnly celebrated than in the lands which border the Eastern Mediterranean. Under the names of Osiris, Tammaz, Adonis and Attis, the people of Egypt and Western Asia represented the yearly decay and revival of life, especially of vegetable life, which they personified as god who annually died and rose again from the dead. In name and detail the rites varied from place to place: in substance they were the same. The supposed death and resurrection of this oriental deity, a god of many names, was of essentially one nature".[1] Thus we can see that mythologically, Adonis and Kaman are essentially the same. Babylonians called Adonis as Tammuz, the lover of Ishtar. It is said "that every year Tammuz was believed to die, passing away from the cheerful earth to the gloomy subterranean world, and that every year his divine mistress journeyed in quest of him to the land from which there is no returning, to the house of darkness, where dust lies on door and bolt. During her absence the passion of love ceased to operate. Men and beasts alike forgot to reproduce their kinds: all life was threatened with extinction. A messenger of the great god Ea was accordingly despatched to rescue the goddess on whom so much depended. The stern queen of the infernal regions, Allalu or Ereshkigal by name, reluctantly allowed Ishtar to be sprinkled with the water of life and to depart, in company

1. The Golden Bough (abridged) p. 325.

probably with her lover, Tammuz, that the two might return together to the upper world and that with their return all nature might revive". The death of the god was mourned annually with bitter wailing and images of him dressed to resemble corpses were carried as if for burial and then thrown into the sea.[1] Thus, in ritual also the mourning for Adonis resembled that of Manmatha. As the Tamil people thought that spring and Manmatha were closely connected, the myth of Adonis also showed that the resurrection of Adonis meant the revival of vegetation. Both must be a dramatic representation of the decay and revival of plant life.

**General Festivals**: Apart from these propitiatory festivals, there were others which were general in character. The day on which the moon is in conjunction with the constellation Kirthigai (Pi Tauri or Pleiades) has been considered as a day of festivity from the Sangam period down to the present times. The chief feature of this day is the lighting of many small earthen-ware lamps on the pials of houses and in temples. Even during the early days it seems to have been the custom to light countless little lamps[2]. Ahananuru says that on that day the streets used to be lighted with many lamps.

"மழைக்கா னீங்கிய மாக விசும்பிற்
குறுமுயன் மறு நிறங்கிளர னடுநாளன்
மறுகுவிளக் குறுத்து மாலைத் தூக்கி
பழவிறன் மூதூர்ப் பலருடன் துவன்றிய விழவு"

It is said that that it was the day of great giving when the wealthy distributed alms to the poor.[3]

1. The Golden Bough (Abridged edition) p. 326.
2. Aham 141, Narrinai 202; Chintamani, 256.
3. Narrinai 202.

" கண்டிசின் வாழியோ குறுமக ணுந்தை
யறுமீன் பயந்த வறஞ்செய் திங்கட்
செல்சுடர் நெடுங் கொடி போல " (நற்றிணை 202)

This Karthigai festival forms one of the important festivals of the Tamil country.[1] The hill temple at Tiruvannamalai is considered to be particularly sacred on this day, as it represents the Tejo Lingam (Symbol of Fire). Thousands of pilgrims assemble there every year to witness the lighting of the great beacon, which keeps burning for a number of days. In North India lamps are lit only on the Dipávali Day. This festival of lamps seems to resemble the fire festivals of Europe, i.e., Lenten fires, Mid-summer fires, etc and the festival of Lanterns of the Chinese.

Ahananuru has a solitary reference to a festival in the month of Phalguni.[2] It seems to have been an important one in the Chola kingdom and they seemed to have enjoyed it more in the open groves and the sand mounds of the island surrounded by the rushing Káveri. Even today the conjunction of the constellation Uthiram with the moon in the month of Phalguni is a day of great festivity, especially in the Hindu temples of South India.

**Local Festivals**: Passing on from these general festivals, we come to the special ones like the festival on the hill at Tirupparankunram,[3] the great festival at Madura, the Ulli Vilavu[4] of the Kongar and the festival at Kaverip-

1. Chintamani 256. " கார்த்திகை விளக்கிட்டன்ன கடிகமழ் குவளை பைந்தார் "
2. Aham 141.

" கழுமலந் தந்த நற்றேர்ச் செம்பியன்
பங்குனி விழவின் வஞ்சியோ
டுள்ளி விழவி னுறந்தையுஞ் சிறிதே "

3. Paripadal 19.
4. Aham 368.

pumpattinam.[1] Tirupparankunram has been sacred from the Sangam age since it has been one of the six abodes of Murugan or Scyon, the deity of the hilly tracts of South India. It is the place where Murugan is supposed to have married Valli, the daughter of the mountain chieftain. So it has been doubly sacred to the Tamil people from the time of Nakkirar to this day. The festival at this hill was of great importance in the Pándyan Kingdom. On the day of the festival the road from Madura to the hill would be impassable owing to the flower garlands strewn about by the visitors. Men and women crowded with their offerings. Some went merely for sight seeing. Those who were in need of blessings prayed to the Great One with the invincible Vel. Others sauntered along the hill-sides wondering at the paintings thereon. Interpreters went on droning 'This is the portrait of the unfortunate Ahalya.' 'This is Indra, disguised as a cat, trying to escape from his inevitable fate, etc.' Some amused themselves by feeding the monkeys with delicious sweets. There were the brahmins chanting mantras and performing sacrificial rites. There were some who were singing to the accompaniment of Veena and others giving votive offerings to the elephant of Murugan. On the whole the place was echoing with the babble of voices. (Paripadal 19). The Pandyan king took a personal interest in the celebration of this festival as the Chola king did in the Indra Vilavu. He went there with a big retinue and gave offerings in person.

The Kongar seem to have had a festival by the name of Ulli Vilavu. The peculiar feature of this festival was that the participants wore bells round their waists and danced in public streets.[2]

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1. Pattina Palai ll. 253-255.
8. Aham 368.

கொங்கர்
மணியரை யாத்து மறுகின் ஆடும்
உள்ளி விழவு (அகம் 368)

Apart from these, villages had their own festivals. They wore announced by the old potter of the village. He were a wreath of nocchi flowers and went through the broad streets of the village announcing the festival.[1]

" கழுநீர் கொண்ட எழுதாக அகந்தி
பாலிகை வந்து விழவின் அறைந்தன்றே"

Some of the other local festivals were the seven days' festival at Madura[2]. Festival of Kaverippumpattinam.

" மருவின் நம்பூத் தழுவிப் பெருவின்
மறுகுளத் தேரோடிய முறுகோன் புணர்ந்த
திரிபுரி நரம்பின் தீங்கொடை யோர்க்கும்
பெருவிழாக் கழிந்த பேஎநிதி மன்றத்து"[3]
(Pattina Palai 253-255).

Puram 332 tells us of a festival held in honour of Vel. We do not know whether this was the spear of Murugan or just the weapon of the warriors. Whatever it be, the festival seems to have been celebrated with great pomp. "With auspicious women wearing garlands, with sweet music which resounded throughout the length and breadth of the country, the festival was carried on."

" மங்கல மகளிரொடு மாலை சூட்டி
இன்குரல் இரும்பை யாழொடு ததும்பத்
தெண்ணீர்ப் பரப்பினும் தெருவினும் திரிந்து
மண்முழுது அழுங்கச் செல்லுமாறு" (புறம் 332)

1. Narrinai 296-700.
2. Madurai-k-Kanci 427-429.
3. Pattina Palai ll. 253-255.

At Tiruvenkata Malai or the modern Tirupati Hill, a festival akin to Tirupparankunram festival seems to have been held.

" விழவுடை விழுச்சீர் வேங்கடம் " )அகம் 61)

Whatever be the significance of these festivals , they were surely occasions of great rejoicing. When the festival was of State importance like Indra Vila and the festival at Tirupparankunram, the Ruler made all the necessary arrangements for the entertainment of the citizens. In the village festival the inhabitants made their own arrangement. Men and women took an active part. Folk dances were in vogue and the village common was the scene of wrestling matches also. Women generally danced the Tunangai Kuttu on these festive days. During the dance and in a particular variety of it, the men joined and gave 'a hand' which was called the 'first hand.' Divakaram explains the dance thus : " with the hand bent at the elbow and pressed against the ribs, the dancer moved with rapid steps."[1]

Adiyarkunallar calls it as the Singi-k-kuttu (சிங்கிக் கூத்து). Though Tunangai was a festive dance, yet it was performed on a particular day after the festival. In Kuruntogai 364, the heroine tells her maid that " on the day of dancing Tunangai, those who jeer at me could have proofs of his (her lover's) affection and constancy." The Tunangai dance in festivals was different from the one performed by warriors.

Closely associated with festivals was another dance known as 'Kuravai-k-kuttu. Kuravai seems to have

1. " முடக்கிய விருகை பழுப்புடை யொற்றித்
துடக்கிய நடையது துணங்கை யாகும் "

undergone great changes in its significance, as it passed from region to region. Kurinchi, the region of hills, used this as a pastime for mere pleasure. Here it was performed by men and women in their hilarious moods. A stanza in Puram says as follows:

> "the Kuravar who lived in small houses covered with meagre thatch, drinking teral, performed the Kuravai dance in the village common."[1]

Aham and Tirumurugarru-padai confirm this.[2] This Kuravai which was danced by men and women alike in Kurinchi for pleasure alone, was danced by the girls of the Neidal region. Ainkurunuru tells us of girls who played in water and danced Kuravai on the sands.[3] The joyous cry raised by fisher girls dancing the Kuravai has been included as one of the noises to be heard at Kudal (Madurai-k-kanci). Here no other motive seems to have been present except mere pleasure. It was reserved for special occassions and served the purpose of invoking their deity 'Mayavan.' The particular part played by Kuravai is shown by the words

> "By dancing the Kuravai and singing the conventional songs,
>
> Let us praise him whose glory never fades."[4]

Silappadikaram has dedicated a whole chapter to this

1. Puram.
2. Aham.
   Tirumurugarru Padai.
3. Ainkurunuru.
4. Kalit-t-Togai 103. குரவை தழீ இயாமரபுளி பாடித்
   தேயா விழுபபுகழத தெயவம் பரவுது

Kuravai of the shepherds.[1] When Madari, the shepherdess, saw the milk failing to ferment and the calves refusing to suck, she feared the ill-omen and arranged to perform a Kuravai, to appease their deity Mayan. She chose seven girls, arranged them in a circle, named them each after a note in music and made them dance the Kuravai by joining hands.[2] Later on this propitiatory dance was played to intercede for the welfare of their king (Kali 108). In Madurai-k-kanchi, women seem to have used the Kuravai for the same purpose.[3] When Velan the priest of Murugan, began dancing before his diety and praising Him, the women assembled there danced the Kuravai-k kuttu. From the propitiatory, it passed on to the stage of "war-dance." Puram 22 illustrates how the blood-thirsty soldiers of Cheraman Sanai K. Kat. Coi. Mantram Cheral Irum porai, danced the wild Kuravai wearing palmyra leaves interwoven with gold leucas flowers. The noise of their wild Kuravai rose above the roar of the waves. This was called Veri-k-kuravai. Thus the innocent dancing performed by girls on festive occasions came to be invested with special powers and made to serve various purposes. To-day nothing of it remains except the word 'Kulavai' in a much mutilated form. "Kulavai" is an inarticulate sound produced with the tongue, by women, on auspicious occasions, as a good omen.

Then there all were kinds of entertainment where drinking and merry-making played a great part. "And indeed on these occasions the woman drinks-must drink, the and looks so delightful under the effects of intoxicating drink,

1. Silappadikaram : Aychchiyar Kuravai.
2. "
3. Madurai-k-Kanci

because by it love is helped ".[1] There are many instances of women drinking teral (a heady drink made with honey and preserved in bamboo sticks). In the epics also we are told of how Devayani, the haughty daughter of Cukhra, and her serving women made merry by drinking Madhu Madhavi. It is said that in the festival held in honour of the mountain Raivataka, Draupadi and Subhadra gave clothing and ornaments to the women and made themselves merry with drinking. " Some danced in unbridled gladness, others shrieked and screamed with joy; some among the glorious women were laughing, and the others drinking the best of rum (asava). Here some were clutching hold of one another and striking each other, others again were talking their secrets over among themselves."[2] The scene is strikingly parallel to the one described in Kali-t-togai. 92.[3]

As elsewhere, Bacchus and Venus showed themselves as brother and sister in these festivals.[4] The harlots formed a chief part of the festivals but it was not required of any one to prostitnte hereself for religious purposes as in the festival of Adonis. Moreover, we hear of no special religious celebrations as we have in the case of Floratia at Rome. " Flora, the Roman goddess of flowers and Spring, was according to legend originally a prostitute. Her annual festival the Floratia, which was celebrated for a week at the end of April and the beginning of May, was the time of great merriment and voluptuousness. We are told

1. Sexual Life in Ancient India p. 327.
2. Do Do Do p. 353.
3. Kalittogai 92.
4 Pattina Palai ll. 105-115.
   Paripadal 7; 20; 6; 10.

that during this holiday the Roman prostitutes used to...... ...........and to execute lively and lascivious dances." (Prostitution in the Ancient World by Leo Markeen, p. 16). "There were many such holidays in Greece as well, among which perhaps the most famous was the celebration of the harlots at Corinth in honour of the laughter-loving Aphrodite" (p. 26). No such thing is heard of in Tamil literature. We can only gather that harlots took part in the festivals. But it was required of such of those of the profession, as were skilled in fine arts to display their talents in public, and when they failed to do so, they were abused by the populace who patronised them.[1]

1. Silappadikaram XIV

## CHAPTER IX

## CUSTOMS AND SUPERSTITIONS

Social customs and institutions have been described as the "expressions of the communal will and the crystallizations of communal experience". Sister Nivedita has called "custom" as the jewel casket of humanity. Separated from its philosophical aspect, religion in India has been a system of rituals and observances based either on reason or on superstition and bound up into the social life of the country. It was particularly so in the Tamil land where most of the customs were reflection of the prevalent religious beliefs and some of these were also closely associated with festivals.

The worship of the Moon was one of the prevalent customs of the Tamil land. What was the religious signification underlying this custom? The Moon is supposed to exert a sympathetic influence on growth especially of vegetation. Sir. J. G. Frazer says " It is especially the appearance of the New Moon with its promise of growth and increase which is greeted with ceremonies intended to renew and invigorate by means of sympathetic magic, the life of man. Observers ignorant of savage superstitions have commonly misinterpreted such customs as worship or adoration paid to the moon. In point of fact the ceremonies of New Moon are probably in many cases rather magical than religious".[1] Thus people from the banks of Ucayali river in Peru down to India hail with great joy the appearance of the New Moon with its promise of increase.[2] In the Tamil land also the New Moon was welcomed with great joy and many worshipped the symbol of growth, *i.e.*, the crescent.

1. The Golden Bough, Vol. II Part IV

The Smritis, especially Atri Smriti, say that Moon is the Sasyadipati, or the Lord of Vegetation. So the Tamilians must also have looked upon the "the refulgent lamp of night" (Pope) as a benefactor to their crops and worshipped him in that capacity; for Kuruntogai 307 says,

"வளையுடைத் தனைய தாகிப் பலர்தொழு
செவ்வாய் வானக் கையெனத் தோன்றி
இன்னாய் பிறந்தன்று பிறைனன"

Throughout the world the New Moon was worshipped. "Among the Baganda of Central Africa, there is general rejoicing when the New Moon appears and no work is done for seven days".[1] There are many other ways in which people have sought to turn lunar sympathy to practical account. Clearly the increase of the moon is the time to increase your goods and the decrease of the moon is the time to diminish your ills."[2]

This genial influence of the New Moon "is often supposed to be particularly beneficial to children; for will not the waxing moon help them to wax in strength? So we see that at one stage or another in many countries of the world infants were presented to the New Moon. In the island of Kiruvina, one of the Tro-briands group to the east of New Guinea, a mother always lifts up or presents her child to the first full moon after its birth in order that it may grow fast and talk soon."[3] But the custom of the Thonga of South Africa resembles the Indian custom closely. There the ceremony is not done until the mother has resumed her menstuation, which usually happens in the third month after delivery. The presentation of the infants to the moon formed one of the important ceremonies in the Vedic ritual. Even now, it is prevalent among the people of North

1. The Golden Bough, Vol. II, Part IV.
2. Do. do. do.
3. Do. do. do.

India though it has shrivelled into a skeleton and it is called the Nishkramana ceremony. "On the third day of the third fortnight of the waxing moon after birth, the father adores the moon and takes the child from the mother, recites the Vedic verses and gives him back to her. In the next fortnight of the waxing moon he makes an oblation of water to the moon."[1]

Thus we see that the moon was worshipped as a benefactor of vegetation and of increase and promoter of growth and strength. But what was the special influence which the moon had for the maids of the Tamil land? Here the Smritis throw some light. Arti Smriti 137 says, "Soma gives them (women) purity; Gandharva bestows sweet speech, and Agni, sarvamedhatva or purity". The author of "Aryan Marriage" clarifies this suggestion as follows:—[2]

"Soma is sasyadipati, the Lord of the vegetable world, and presides also over the mind. The physical growth of the girl, including that of the hair, is under the care of God Soma. The mind of the girl develops under his guidance." Such is the beneficial influence of the moon on the growth, both physical and mental, of a girl. We have seen already that many of the gods of the Aryan pantheon had come to be accepted in the Tamil land; for instance, Indra or Parjanya as the god of thunder, had been accepted and worshipped by the people of the Tamil land also.[3] Therefore it is quite probable that Soma or the Moon had come to be recognised as the presiding diety of a girl's youth in the Tamil land. The maid seeing the physical changes in her young mistress and wishing to ascertain the truth of her

1. Antiquities of India by L. D. Barnett, p. 139.
2. Golden Bough, Vol. II. Part IV. Indian History Congress —Symbolism of Hindu Nuptials.
3. Tolkappiam.—Porul Sutram.

love, asks her, playfully, to come and worship the Moon. If the moon did not have a special signification, why should the maid ask her mistress to worship him? Any other deity might have been suggested as well. Soma was supposed to be one of those deities who have the guardianship of a girl. Rig Veda, X 85, 40-41 says, "the woman belongs first to Soma, Gandharva and Agni and only afterwards to her husband." Soma or the Moon was thus one of the first proprietors of the maiden, and therefore it is but right that she should worship him. The signification is brought out fully by the circumstance in which the girl is asked to worship the Moon. It was a convention with the girl of the Tamil land that once she had chosen her lord she could not worship any other deity. If the girl refused to worship the Moon, then it was clear that she had chosen her lover.

From the Aryan point of view the inference is that she had passed from the guardianship of the moon to that of a man.

"மைவார் கருங்கண்ணி செங்கரங் கூப்பு மறந்துமற்றப்
பொய்வா னவரிற் புகாது தன் பொற்கழற்கே யடியே
னுய்வான் புகவொளிர் தில்லைநின் றோன் சடைமேலதொத்
துச்
செவ்வா னடைந்த பசுங்கதிர் வெள்ளைச் சிறுபிறைக்கே"[1]

'திளைக்கும் திரைமேழுனக்கு முன் னேன்றலிற்
செம்பொன் வெற்பை
வளைக்கும் பிரான்முடி வைகு தலாற்றஞ் சைவாணன்
மண்மேல்
விளைக்கும் புகழ்போல விளங்கு தலாற் செக்கர் விண்
ணிறைகாள்
தளைக்குங் குழற்றிருவே தொழுவே தகுந் தன்மையதே"[2]

The custom of ceremonious bathing in the month of Thai seems to have had a religious origin. Thai (Dec.-Jan.)

1. Tirukkovai 67.
2. Tanjai Vanan Kovai 64.

is the coldest month of the year. Paripadal 11 identified this Thain-niradal with the festival of Adirai or Thiruvadirai as it is known to-day. The ritual seems to be when the thundering clouds had cleared, on the day when the moon was in conjunction with Tiru Vadirai, (Betelgeaux-Orion), the brahmins began the festival and others carried the auspicious things. The girls who were performing the ceremony of Amba Vadal or Thain-niradal did it with the guidance of the aged Brahmin women.

"விரிநூ லந்தணர் விழவு தொடங்க
வெம்பா தாக வியனில வரைப்பென
அம்பா வாடலின் ஆய்தொடிக் கன்னியர்
முனித்துறை முதல்வியர் முறைமை காட்ட"[1]

In later literature, this Thain-niradal came to be in the month of Margali or December, and was sung of by Manikkavasagar and Andal in Tiruvemba and Tiruppavai respectively. The purpose of the latter of the two poems seems to be that of asking the maids to come, bathe and worship Kannan to have their wishes fulfilled. Rao Sahib M. Raghava Iyengar says that this was a reminiscence of the worship of Kathyayani by the Gopis of Gokulam to fulfil their hearts' desire, *i.e.*, getting Krishna to be their lord.

In Sangam literature, the maids of the Tamil land seemed to have undertaken this Thain-niradal in order to secure good husbands.[2]

மருளியான் மருளுற இவனுற்ற தெவனென்று
மருளிய யிவட்கென வப்பலார்நிற் பழிக்குங்கால்
வையெயிற் றவர் நாப்பண் வகையணிப் பொலிந்து நீ
தையினீ ராடிய தவந்தலைப் படுவாயோ"

1. Paripadal 11.
2. நற்றிணை 80.

**உரை**: "யான் மயக்கமுறுகையிலே அதுகண்டு தானும்
மருண்டு இவனுற்ற நோய் யாதுதான் என்று கேட்கும்
அருள் இவட்கு இல்லையென்று யான்கூற, அதுகேட்டு
அயலார் நின்னைப் பழிக்குமளவிற் கூரிய எயிற்றினையுடைய
இளைய மகளிர்க்கு நடுவே வகுப்பையுடைய கோலத்தாலே
பொலிவு பெற்று நீ தைத்திங்களில் நீராடிய நோன்பின்
பயனைப் பெறுவையோ? பெறாய் காண்

**பயன்**: சிறந்த கணவற் பெறுதல்"[1]

This reminds us of the ceremony observed on the eve of St. Agnes by the maids of Europe.

> " How upon St. Agne's Eve
> Young virgins might have visions of delight
> and soft adorings from their lovers' receive
> upon the honeyed middle of the night.
>
> If ceremonies due they did aright
> As supperless to bed they must retire.
>
> (Keats—Eve of St. Agnes).

The maids of the Tamil land also seemed to have foregone their meals during the ritual of 'Thain-niradal.[2]

**Velan Veriyadal.** " The belief in temporary incarnation or inspiration is world-wide. Certain persons are supposed to be possessed from time to time by a spirit or deity. While the possession lasts, their own personality lies in abeyance, the presence of the spirit is revealed by convulsive shiverings and shakings of the man's whole body by wild gestures and excited looks, all of which are referred not to the man himself but to the spirit which has entered him ; and in his abnormal state all his utterances are

1. **Kali-t-togai 59.**
2. வான்பெய னனைந்த புறத்த நோன்பியர்
தையூ ணிருக்கையிற் றோன்று நாட (நற். 22)

accepted as the voice of the god or spirit dwelling in him and speaking through him."[1] Such was Velan, the priest of Murugan, the representative of God Murugan on earth. Often he was possessed by Murugan. It was then that the anxious mothers of truant daughters consulted him as to the cause of their daughters' ailments.[2] The girl's maid felt shy at the mother's preparation to consult the Velan (வெறியாட்டு,) and therefore, she told her young mistress while the lover was at a hearing distance that "if your mother, seeing the close fitting bangles of yours running loose, should consult the aged sooth-sayers (Kattuvichchiyar) they with their small wands and resourceful lies would tell her that Murugan has possessed you.

" அன்னை வாரோத்
செறிந்திலங் கெல்வளை நெகிழ்ந்தமை நோக்கிக்
கையறு நெஞ்சினள் வினவலின் முதுவாய்ப்
பொய்வல் பெண்டிர் பிரப்புளர்பு இரீஇ
முருகன் ஆரணங் கென்றலின் அது செத்து
ஓவத் தன்ன வினைபுனை நல்லிற்
பாவை யன்ன பலராய் மாண்கவின்
பண்டையிற் சிறக்க என் மகட்கெனப் பரைஇக்
கூடுகொள் இன்னியங் கறங்கக் களனிழைத்து
ஆடணி யயர்ந்த அகன்பெரும் பந்தர்
வெண்போழ் கடம்பொடு சூடி இன்சீர்
ஐதமை பாணி யிரீஇக் கைபெயராச்
செல்வன்பெரும் பெயர் ஏத்தி வேலன்
வெறியயர் வியன்களம் பொற்ப வல்லோன்
பொறியமை பாவையின் தூங்கல் வேண்டின்
என்னாங் கொல்லோ தோழி ;'[3]

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1. The Golden Bough
2. Kuruntogai 23; 26; 84; 244; 263.
   Narrinai 288
   Ainkurunuru 241-50.
3. Aham 98.

A curious instance is mentioned in 'Ainkurunuru where an effigy which is called Kannam (கன்னம்), is given, to relieve the girl of her ailment.[1] The idea was most probably to transfer the illness to the effigy. This idea of transmission is world-wide.[2]

Velan sacrificed a young lamb, a suckling to Murugan and mixed the millet grain (தினை) with the blood of the acrifi ced animal and sprinkled it all round.

"படியோர்த் தேய்த்த பல்புகழ்த் தடக்கை
நெடுவேள் பேணத் தணிகுவள் இவளென
முதுவாய்ப் பெண்டிர் அதுவாய் கூறக்
களன்நன் இழைத்துக் கண்ணி சூட்டி
வளநகர் சிலம்பப் பாடி பலிகொடுத்து
உருவச் செந்தினை குருதியொடு தூஉய்
முருகாற்றுப் படுத்த"[3]

The sooth-sayers were consulted first by the anxious mother. They told her the cause of the ailment with the help of unhusked rice, molucca beans and Kattu. They were called 'Kattuvichchyar'. Throughout ages women. and especially old women, had been thought to be capable of doing extraordinary things, such as reading the future. inflicting harm on other beings, etc. "In Delphi, the Seer was a woman Pythia, who was thrown into a state of ecstatic frenzy by the influence of a vapour ascending from a cleft in the earth within the Adylen, and while in this state uttered words and cries which contained the answer

1. Ainkurunuru 245.
2. "பொய்யா மரபி னூர்முது வேலன்
கழங்குமெய்ப் படுத்துக் கன்னந் தூக்கி
முருகென மொழியு மாயின்
கெழுதகை கொல்லிவ ளணங்கி யோற்கே"
3. Golden Bough, Vol. I. Ch. III.

of Apollo ".[1] But there came a time in Europe and specially in England, when these old women were looked upon with suspicion and often put to death as witches. A whole library of books, pamphlets and magazine articles is in existence about witch-craft and most readers will have some acquaintance with the subject and a natural horror of the cruelty with which poor old women were pursued in the witch-hunts. "It is now almost two centuries and a quarter since the last execution of witches, though an old woman died from being ducked as a witch at Longmarston in Northants as much later as 1752".[2] In Tamil land these women were never persecuted. On the contrary they were consulted about the success of the expedition,[4] to the anxious mother, and to the lonely wife, to divine the future.

" A strange hunger to know the future is a universal human trait and the method of satisfying it by attempts to divine what is going to happen are numerous ". Almost anything, approached in the right spirit, can be employed as a means of divination, probably with an equal chance of success. One such means was " virichchi ", the chance word spoken by some one and taken to be an indication of being conscious of the person to whom it might concern. Even to-day this is in vogue. When a person is anxious about something, if he or she hears a good word spoken unknowingly, which happens to be the answer needed, then it is considered to be a good omen. This chance word was known as ' virichchi '. In Mullaippattu, the wife's people consulted the Kattuvichchi and then, by accident, they

1. Encyclopaedia Britannica—" Oracle "
2. English Folklore by A. R. Wright.
3. புறம் 58 " பணையியங் குரவம் பாகத்து விரிச்சி "
4. குறுந் 218 " விடாமுகை யடுக்கத்து விறல்கெழு சூலிக்குக்
கடனும் பூணாங் கைந்நூல் யாவாம்
புள்ளு மோராம் விரிச்சியு நில்லோம் "

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heard the words "they would return soon". These words were uttered by a shepherdess, to quieten the calves that their mothers would return soon. This seems to have consoled the wife very much.

"நாழி கொண்ட நறுவீ முல்லை
அரும்பவிழ் அலரி தூஉய்க் கைதொழுது
பெருமுது பெண்டிர் விரிச்சி நிற்பச்
சிறுதாம்பு தொடுத்த பசலைக் கன்றின்
உறுதுய ரலமர னோக்கி யாய்மகள்
நடுங்குசுவ லசைத்த கையள் கைய
கொடுங் கோற் கோவலர் பின்னின் றுய்த்தர
இன்னே வருகுவர் தாய ரென்போள்
நன்னர் நன்மொழி கேட்டன மதனால்
நல்ல நல்லோர் வாய்ப்புட் டெவ்வர்
முனைகவர்ந்து கொண்ட திறையர் வினைமுடித்து
வருத றலைவர் வாய்வது நீ நின்
பருவர லெவ்வங் களைமா யோயென"[1]

Connected closely with Virichchi are the "nimittams" or omens. It is said that "of the many unique customs prevalent among the Hindus, Sakunam or omen is perhaps one of the most interesting. But those omens do not seem to be the peculiar property of the Hindus; for the author of "English Folklore"[2] says "the decrees of fate may be discovered by active measures of divination to force their disclosure or by passive observation of the shadows cast as omens of coming events. The prevalence of fear of the future is shown by the overwhelming number of ominous presages, chiefly of death. Almost anything unusual, a falling picture, a cat dying in the house, rats nibbling the furniture, a broken mirror, a mole approaching the house, the howling of a dog, a cock crowing before midnight, the

1. Mullai-ppat-trull 9-21.
2. A. R. Wright F. S. A.

screeching of an owl, the breaking of the Christmas pudding, the stopping of King Henry VIII's astronomical clock at Hampton Court (occurred in 1924), a diamond crease from bad crossing of a table cloth, at the laundry, a horse whinnying at a funeral and a hundred other things all betoken death". We do not have many omens foretelling death.[1] The throbbing of certain parts of the body are signs of coming good, while of certain other parts indicate the opposite. The throbbing of the left side of the body and especally the eye and shoulder is considered as lucky for a woman.

Even in English society omens were consulted from one's own body such as "spots on the nails for gifts, meeting eyebrows for those to be hanged or drowned, hair cast into the fire burning brightly for long life, tingling of the ears for scandal, itching of the nose for vexation, itching of the right hand before receiving money and of the left before paying it, itching of the sole of the foot before treading on fresh ground."[2]

Sneezing is good or bad according to the number of times sneezed. Valluvar says that if any one sneezed, it means that the person was being remembered by some one, most probably by one of his relatives.[3]

When a person sneezed, he was blessed by the person nearby who would say 'may you live long'. It was compulsory in the case of the wife when her husband sneezed.[4]

There is a curious rhyme in English which runs as follows :

1. English Folklore by A. R. Wright, F.S.A.
2. Do. do.
3. Kural.
4. Kural, Ch. 132-2.

"Sneeze on Monday, sneeze for danger
Sneeze on Tuesday kiss a stranger
Sneeze on Wednesday get a letter
Sneeze on Thursday something better
Sneeze on Friday sneeze for sorrow
Saturday, see your true love tomorrow"[1]

Animals, the folk think, know many things that we do not and they are especially clever in forecasting the approaching weather. Among the reptilia, the lizard is one, which is supposed to be gifted with this instinct. The chirping of the lizard from certain directions had always been considered good and from certain others as evil. The maid, while consoling the sorrowing wife, told her that she need not worry any more, for even the lizard had chirped a good messeage".

**Aham 9**

"பன்மாண்
வீங்கிய நல்லில் ஒருசிறை நிலைஇப்
பாங்கர்ப் பல்லி படுதொறும் பரவி"
**நற்றிணை 98** "பாங்கர்ப் பக்கத்துப் பல்லி பட்டென"
**நற்றிணை 169** "படுங்கொல் வாழி நெடுஞ்சுவர்ப் பல்லி"[2]

Here are some Sufflok sayings "If you hear the sheep at night, rain is coming". "When cows lie down all facing the same way, rain is coming". "When sparrows chirrup, sure to rain". It is said that the "living folklore of birds is extensive". The omen regarding birds was called "Pulnimittam" in Tamil

**Pulnimittam**: Pulnimittam seems to have been very popular among all the tribes of the Tamil land. The bird

1. English Folklore—A. R. Wright. Bairns' six penny series No. 83.
2. Aham 289; 351; 387.

consulted was Kari or the king crow and if it cried with a certain note it was understood to forebode evil. Persons who could interpret their cries were rewarded handsomely, when the success they had foretold came true. These birds were consulted by warriors, when they set out for battle ;

"புலரி விடியற் புள்ளோர்த்துக் கழிமின்

by the wandering minstrels when they sought the audience of generous patrons[1] and by anxious wives, when they wanted to know of the welfare of their husbands.

"விடர்முகை யடுக்கத்து விறல்கெழு சூலிக்குக்
கடனும் பூணாம் கைந்நூல் யாவாம்
புள்ளு மோராம் விரிச்சியு நில்லாம்"[2]

The authority of the omen foretold by pul seems to have been considered unquestionable ; for, a poet, in praising the benevolence of his patron, says that even when he went against pulnimittam to see him (his patron) he never returned unrewarded.

நாளன்று போகிப் புள்ளிடைத் தட்பப்
பதனன்று புக்குத் திறனன்று மொழியினும்
வறிது பெயர்குந ரல்லர் நெறிகொளப்
பாடான் றிரங்கு மருவிப்
பீடுகெழு மலையற் பாடி யோரே"[3]

**Crow.** From time immemorial, people have believed that the crow could foretell the arrival of guests. Kakkaip-patiniyar has put this belief into literary use. An anxious mother coaxed the crow into cawing, and foretelling the arrival of her daughter with her husband. For this purpose the crow was offered food.

"மறுவில் தூவிச் சிறுகருங் காக்கை
அன்புடை மரபினின் கிளையோ டாரப்

1. Puram 204; 124; 80.
2. Kuruntogai 218
3. Puram 124; நற்றிணை 161.

பச்சூன் பெய்த பைந்நிண வல்சி
பொலம்புனை கலத்திற் றருகுவன் மாதோ
வெஞ்சின விறல் வேற் காளை யொ
டஞ்சி லோதியை வரக் கரைந் தீமோ"

In England "the pigeon so abundant in London is a very unlucky bird. It gives a death warning if it settles on a house. The bad luck applies to the ring dove also. Even pigeon feathers are unlucky and in Lancashire their presence in a bed or pillow will make death a lingering one. The favoured robin becomes a death omen, if it approaches the window. Fowls crowding together under a bush prognosticate a quarrel and

"A whistling maid and a crowing hen
Are neither good for God nor men".
—*English Folklore.*

Among the many social customs a notable one is that of walking seven steps with the guest who bids adieu. In Porunnarruppadai the king, Karikal, himself followed the mendicant minstrels to a distance of seven paces, showing thereby that he considered these wandering bards as his friends.[1]

**Swearing by Natural Objects.** It is said that among the Akamba of British East Africa solemn oaths are made before an object called a Kithito, which is believed to be endowed with a mysterious power of killing perjurers. In front of the object are placed seven stones and the man who makes oath stands, so that his heels rest on two of them.

Ainkurunuru 391.
Porunarrup-padai 165-167.
"பாலபுரை புரவி நாலகுடன் பூட்டிக
காலின் ஏழடிப பின்சென்று கோலின
தாறுகளைந் தேற்றி"
Folklore in the Old Testament by J. G. Frazer.

At Ghoosegong in the Garo hills of Assam, there is a stone on which the natives swear their most solemn oaths. In doing so, they first salute the stone, then with their hands joined and uplifted and their eyes steadfastly fixed on the hills, they call on Mahadeva to witness to the truth of what they affirm. After that they again touch the stone with all the appearance of the utmost fear and bow their heads to it, calling again on Mahadeva. And while they make their declaration they look steadfastly to the hills and keep their right hand on the stone." In the Tamil land also natural objects such as hills seem to have been regarded with awe, and swearing by them was usual. When the husband, who had sworn by the hill of Velan was negligent about his promises, the wife feared that the wrath of the God might descend on her lover.[1] Likewise, the Garos also swear on meteoric stones, saying "May Goera (the God of lightning) kill me with one of these if I have told a lie".[2] In this case, however, the use of the stone is retributive rather than confirmatory. Dr. Frazer says[3] 'Oaths sworn upon stones thus definitely conceived as divine are clearly religious in character, since they involve an appeal to a supernatural power who visits transgressors with his anger. But in some of the preceding instances the stone is apparently supposed to act purely through the physical properties of weight, solidity and inertia, accordingly in these cases the oath or whatever the ceremony it may be, is purely magical in character. The man absorbs the valuable properties of the stone just as he might absorb electrical force from a battery: he is, so to say, petrified by the electricity in the other"

1. Kuruntogai 209.
"பிறங்குமலை
மீமிசைக் கடவுள் வாழ்த்திக் கைதொழுது
ஏமுறு வஞ்சினம் வாய்மையிற் றேற்றி"
2. Folklore in the Old Testament by J. G. Frazer.
3. Do. do. do.

Another form of popular swearing seems to be that of taking a handful of water, propitiating a God and drinking the same.[1] This seems to have been a form of oath which was unbreakable. It seems a similar custom of swearing by water was prevalent among the ancient Danes for the affirmation of faith in love.[2] (Charles Garvice 'Only a Girl's Love, p. 64).

**The Deity of the Threshold :** Among many peoples of the world, the threshold has been considered sacred as it was supposed to be the seat of a deity. Dr. Frazer says, "It is more probable that the door (Janua) got its name from Janus than that he got his name from it. It is conjectured that it might have been customary to set up an image or symbol of Janus at the principal door of the house in order to place the entrance under the protection of the great god. A door thus guarded might be known as a Janua Foris, that is, a Januan door. The phrase might in time be abridged into Janua, the noun "foris" being understood but not expressed.".[3] So also the Tamilians considered the entrance to the house, as the seat of guardian diety and propitiated it by decorating it with oil and mustard seed.[4]

It is said that this divine watchman, Janua, was represented as having two heads facing opposite directions. The bush negroes of Surin regularly set up a guardian idol with two heads at the entrance of a village. In the Tamil land

1. Kurnchipattu 209.
 பிறங்குமலை
 மீமிசைக் கடவுள் வாழ்த்திக் கைதொழு
 "ஏமுறு வஞ்சினம் வாய்மையிற் றேற்றி
 யந்தீந் தெண்ணீர் குடித்தலின்"
2. Only a Girl's Love by Charles Garvice, p. 64.
3. The Golden Bough Vol. II, Part I, p. 384.
4. Nedulnalvadai 86, Madurai-k-kanci 353-255.

they seemed to have set up the figure of Lakshmi or Tiru flanked on either side by an elephant with uplifted trunk. Nachchinarkiniyar explains the following passage as pertaining to Gajalakshmi or the popular figure found on entrance.

> " வரிநுதல் எழில் வேழம் பூநீர் பெய்து சொரிதரப்
> புரிநெகிழ் தாமரை மலரங்கண் வீறெய்தித்
> திருநயம் திருந்தன்ன தேங்கமழ் விறல்வெய்ய "

This is a common phenomenon in South India. Many of the houses have their entrances decorated with the figure of Lakshmi and elephants. Most probably it is set up as an auspicious mark indicating the prosperity of the house and that may be the reason why South Indian matrons decorate the threshold with Kumkum and saffron on every Friday and on all festive occasions.

**The Deity of the Household**: Every household had its particular deity. The house itself was called the house with a diety.[3]

> " மணம் புணர்ந்தோங்கிய அணங்குடை நல்லில் "

Even today the majority of South Indian Hindus, especially round about Madras, have a deity called "Nadu Veettu Thaivam" (நடு வீட்டுத் தெய்வம்). They dedicate a part of the house for it, and on all occasions clean it, decorate it and place offerings there. They seldom begin any ceremony without propitiating the household deity.

**Diety of the Village common**: The village common seemed to have been the seat of a powerful diety.

1. Kali t-togai 44.
2. Aham 282.
3. Madurai-k-kanci 578.

"மன்ற மரா அத்த பேஎமுதிர் கடவுள்
கொடியோர்த் தெறூஉ மென்ப"

Even to-day almost all the villages have their guardian deities. In towns every cross road has a deity and sometimes it is Ganesha, the warder of evils. Silappapikaram talks of the four (deities) who guarded the four quarters of the City of Kaveripumpattinam.[2]

**Worship of the Lamps**: The worship of the lamps in the evenings is one of the customs which has survived the ravage of time and the influx of civilization. As the golden lamp of the skies sets in the west, the women of the household clean their lamps, put fresh wicks and light them and then throw flowers and grains of (Akshatai) rice and worship them. It is said that even when the sun was not visible owing to heavy clouds, women knew the time of sunset by the opening of the jasmine buds, kept in the baskets and worshipped the lamps and the Evening diety.[3]

The lamp forms a significant ornament of a South Indian home. Iron lamps have been replaced by bright bronze or brass lamps. Among the Karkatha Velallar when a girl is about 5 or 6 years, an old woman of the family ties a sacred thread round the child's neck and from that time onwards she belongs to the lamp and worships it regularly.

1. Kuruntogai 87.
2. Silappadikaram.
3. Nedunalvadai 36-44.
"மடவரல மகளிர பிடகைப பெய்த
செவ்வி யரும்பின பைங்காற் பித்திகத்து
அவ்வித ழவிழ்பதங் கமழ்பு பொழுதறிந்து
இரும்புசெய் விளக்கின ஈர்ந்திரிக் கொளீஇ
நெல்லு மலருந் தூஉய்க் கைதொழுது
மல்ல லாவண மாலை யயர"

On the first of Thai (January-February), *i.e.*, on Pongal day the material required for the worship of the lamp has to be provided from the mother's house as long as she is a sumangali. On the day of marriage the earlier thread with its gold symbol is removed and attached to the tali proper. This custom shows clearly the importance of the lamp in a South Indian household.

**Charms**: At certain times, the human being is thought to be highly susceptible to the influence of the evil spirits prowling about him for mischief. So a warrior wounded mortally in the battlefield was an easy prey to the demons hovering round him. To keep these at bay, the housewife placed bunches of margosa leaves at the entrance, strew mustard seed about his bed, and kept awake singing the Kanchippan.[1]

Infants, it was believed, were easy victims of the demons. So when an infant was taken out of tho house, the mother protected it from the influence of evil spirits by carrying twigs of margosa leaves.

"நாடக மகளி ராடு களத் தெடுத்த
விசிவீங் கின்னியங் கடுப்பக் கயிறு பிணித்துக்
காடி வைத்த கலனுடை மூக்கின்
மகவுடை மகடூஉப் பகடுபுறந் துரப்பக்

1. தீங்கனி யிரவமொடு வேம்பு மனைச் செரீஇ
வாங்குமருப்பு யாழொடு பல்லியங் கறங்கக்
கைபய பெயர்த்து மையிழு திழுகி
யையவி சிதறி யாம்ப லூதி
யிசைமணி யெறிந்து காஞ்சி பாடி
நெடுநகர் வளைஇ கடிநறை புகைஇக்
காக்க வம்மோ காதலந் தோழி
வேந்துறு விழுமந் தாங்கிய
பூம்பொறி புனைய நெடுந்தகை புண்ணே" (Puram 281)

கோட்டினர் வேம்பினை ஏட்டிலை மிடைந்த
படலைக் கண்ணிப் பரே ரெறுழ்த் திணிதோள்
முடலை யாக்கை முழுவலி மாக்கள்
சிறுதுளை கொடு நுகம் நெறிபட நிரைத்த
பெருங்கயிற் றொழுகை மருங்கிற் காப்ப"

Nachinarkiniyar's interpretation is followed here. But the passage seems to mean that milachas (முழுவலி மாக்கள்) wore garlands of margosa leaves.

Even to day margosa leaves are stuck in the eaves of houses infected with contagious diseases such as small-pox, etc., or where there is child-birth. Priests use the leaves to exorcise devils.

1. Perum-pannarruppadai, ll. 55-63.

## CHAPTER X

## AMUSEMENTS AND MISCELLANEOUS

When men had leisure they resorted to various kinds of diversions such as cock-fight, cival fight (a kind of sparrow), horse-riding and elephant-riding. The cival-fight and Kurum pul had been spoken of at length in Pattinappalai[1] and Kalittogai[2]. We get information about horse-riding and elephant-riding from Marudakkali.[3]

The public gardens and pleasure groves were the places chosen for light adventure.

**Panan.** The panan or the itinerant musician formed part of the man's establishment. These minstrels wandered from place to place with their train and were often received by the chieftains and given handsome presents. The munificence of some of these chiefs were unequalled.[4] Virali, the wife of panan, accompanied him on his rounds and danced when he played on the instrument. The chief instrument of music was Yal or a kind of Veena. Festivals also provided the amusement they needed. There were dances,[5] boxing matches,[6] cock-fights,[7] etc. These festivals were occasions when drinking was also profuse. Reference to picnics on the sands of the rivers and in the groves is often noticed in the Sangam literature.

**Food.** Tamilians were at no time strict vegetarians. Though Tiruvalluvar had advocated vegetarianism,[8] still we

1. Pattinappalai.
2. Kali-t-togai 94.
3. Do. 95-97.
4. Perum-pannarrup-padai, Sirupanarru-padai.
5. Kuruntogai 31-364.
6. Do. 31.
7. Kali-t-togai 94.
8. Kural, Ch. XXVI.

find Sangam literature praising meat and drink. The bard, who was asked to go to the court of Ilantirayan, was told that while passing through the various divisions of the Tamil land he would get the following kinds of food from the inhabitants. In palai or the desert region, the eyyir-riyar, the women of the rigion would give him food cooked from bamboo rice and meat. They gathered the rice, pounded it with wooden pestles in mortars made on the ground and stewed it along with meat. Sometimes they ate the flesh of the Udumbu along with powdered rice. The mullai people or shepherds were not as carnivorous as the desert dwellers. They would give the traveller cooked millet with milk and also bean dhal. The people of the plains could get paddy in plenty and that seems to have formed their staple food. They would give the minstrel rice with fowl curry, and along with that they could get jaggery and sugar-cane juice which they would give in plenty to the needy. The fisher-folk were experts in preparing drinks known as தோப்பி out of rice. Brahmins were strict vege-tarians. The minstrel could get only vegetable prepara-tions in their houses. They would give him rice cooked in milk, or mixed with dhal and raw pomegranate, fried with pepper and curry leaves, in butter. Along with this, they would be able to give him pickles made of pomegranate, mangoes and other fruits. In some homes the traveller, if he were a fruitarian, could get jack fruit, tender cocoanuts, plantain fruits or sweet potatoes and other bulbous roots.[1]

## ORNAMENTS

A composite picture of the ornaments of Tamilian women is given by the author of Silappadikaram in his 'Kadaladu Kathai'.[2] Madhavi, the dancer, wore toe rings

1. Perum-panarrup-padai, ll. 25-365.
2. Silappadikaram, Ch. VI, ll. 83-108.

of which one was shaped like the shark's mouth (open) and the other like peeli. To-day all the rings worn on toes are called "peeli' irrespective of their shape. Among some communities the toe rings are worn by girls even while they are young but among others the peeli and toe rings, *i.e.*, round bands of silver, are worn only by married girls and removed when they are widowed. Like glass bangles these seem to be symbolic of the married state of the woman. She wore padasalam, silambu, padakam, sadankai and karchari, on her ankles. Padasaalam is commonly called padasaram and it is worn by women of South India even to day. There are small silver or lead pebbles cast into it to give the jingling sound, when the wearer walked. Silambu seems to have been a very precious and important ornament. It was worn by maids and was removed on their marriage. The removal of silambu was a great occasion, for a mother, for example, while lamenting for her daughter, says :- -

"Even though he is having the silambu kali nonbu (that is the ceremony of removing silambu) in his own house can't he bring her over to my house to have the wedding proper at least."?[1] Most probably the removal of the silambu meant marriage. The practice of removal of silambu at the time of marriage seems to have been discontinued later as we see in the case of Kannagi who continued to wear it even after her marriage.[2] Silambu was decorated according to the status of the wearer. "Silambu was made of Kilisirai pon (best kind of gold), hollow inside and studded with sapphires and diamonds in regular rows.[3] The hollow was filled with sapphires as in Kannagi's silambu or with

1. Ainkurunuru 399 : நற்றிணை 279.
2. Silappadikaram, Ch II, l. 73, Ch. XX, l. 42.
3. Do. Ch. XVI, ll. 116-119 (Adiyarkunallar's commentary).

pearls as in the Pandyan queen's anklet."[1] This silambu was an ornament just covering the ankle and just below it the padakam was worn. To-day padakam is worn among certain communities of South India. Sadankai is a jingling ornament with small bells attached to a band. At present it may be seen decorating the feet of toddling children of South India. Every mother feels happy to hear the jingling of the sadangai when her child learns to walk.

**Karcaṛi.** The very name is suggestive. Most probably it decorated the forefeet. Our pattai golusu might be a modification of karcari. Passing on from the ankles to the thigh, we have the ornament known as Kurangu sari. It probably served as a band to keep the saree in place.

Pearls and sapphires worked with gold served as shoulder ornaments, *i.e.*, bracelets tolvalai. The wrists were decorated with gold bangles inlaid with rows of diamonds and sapphires. Coral and conch bangles were worn. The earlobe was scooped out and ornaments were worn. The ear ornament seems to have come back into fashion to-day, for it is said that she wore a Kudambai of blue stone and from it was suspended a pendant set with 'Indra nila' and diamonds. She wore many chains on her neck. Some of them were vira sangili; nern sangili, most probably unornamented chain, nan, something like gold thread, and savadi, three or more plain threads of gold fastened by a hook. Sarapali was worn on the collar, most probably something like the modern addigai. She wore many rings on her fingers, her hair was parted in the middle and was decorated with Sri Devi, deivautthi, valam puri sangu, talai palai (most probably worn along

1. Silappadikaram Ch. XX, ll. 67-69.

the parting line) and then two golden lizards, one on the right and the other on the left. All were held together by the ornament known as Talaikolam, and most probably this was fastened along the plait.[1]

We also find descriptions of the ornaments worn by children in the Sangam literature. A typical one is as follows : "On his feet were the toe rings made of beaten gold and the jingling anklet round his ankles. Round his waist was the hand-embroidered silk cloth, dangling as it would and over it was the waist band of corals. His wrists were made beautiful by the wristlet engraved like the eyes of a crab. He wore round his neck gold ornamental pieces shaped like the axe and scythe of Siva. His necklace was made of pearls and other gems were of three strands and they appeared like the garland of the blue lotus.[2] Such is the happy picture of a child.

## WOMAN'S SHARE IN VITAL THINGS AS WAR

Women showed their worth also during war. It was not the soft, delicate wife that we find when she arrayed her son for the battle-field. During an emergency it was not only the men that exhibited patriotism but also the women. One mother declared that her duty was to give birth to the son while the father's was to educate him and it was the duty of the son to kill the he-elephant and return home victorious.[3] Of another mother it is said that her father fell in the first day's battle and her brothers in the next day's fight. Yesterday's battle saw her husband dead and yet she is undaunted. On hearing the sound of the battle-drum she gives her only little son the white dress of the warrior and a

1. Silappadikaram, Ch. VIII 83-108.
2. Kali-t-togai 85; Puram 374; Kuruntogai 48-161 ; Narrinai 250-269.
3. Puram 312.

spear and sends him, a mere child, to the battle field[1]. A mother was asked by an inquisitive stranger where her son was. She replied 'my son is where he ought to be—battle-field—and I am here like the deserted lair of the tiger'.[2] The extraordinary courage displayed by these mothers is illustrated in the following example. She heard that her son was lying dead in the battle-field with a wound on his back and she surmised that he had turned back from the battle-field. That is an insult to a warrior's mother. She rushed to the battle-field saying, 'if it be true that he was wounded on the back, I would cut these breasts off which suckled him'. But on reaching the field, she found her son lying with a spear thrust in his chest and she felt a joy which was greater than when she had heard that a son was born to her.[3] Valluvar goes a step further and says that it was not only as a warrior that the mother wanted her son to win honours but also as a gentleman. He says that a mother's joy is even greater when she hears that her son is a gentleman.[4]

Apart from playing the part of equipping the warriors for the battle, women seemed to have taken part in the war themselves. Mullaippattu speaks of women, who with swords hanging from their girdles kept watch at the entrance of the king's tent while he had camped for a battle.[5] In the epics also we hear of women, not only accompanying the men to wars but also taking an active part in it. Kaikeyi helped King Dasaratha in a battle.

1. Puram 279.
2. Do. 86.
3. Do. 278.
4. Kural, Ch. VII, 69.
5. Mullai-p-pattu, ll. 45-50.

## WOMEN'S SHARE IN MEN'S SOCIAL LIFE

Often the wife realised the necessity of the man having to earn money to fulfil the duties of a householder. In one place the wife says that her husband is her very life just as business is his life.[1]

**Dreadfulness of handling women badly.** Slaying of a woman for any cause has been a thing of horror even among the law-givers. The maxim "the woman is not to be slain" is found in the epics as well as the law-books. Ramayana says that the "man who slays a woman stands on a level with the slayer of a Brahman, or of a cow, with the ungrateful man, with him that desecrates his teacher's marriage-bed and with the man who does not honour the guest".[2] Mahabharata says that "the murder of a woman, together with unfaithfulness towards a friend, ingratitude and the slaying of the teacher, makes up a set of four crimes for which there is no atoning.[3] Though nothing is said on this particular subject in Tamil literature, yet we get the same idea of the horror with which woman-slaying was held in the country by the following lines in Kuruntogai. The girl while cursing the village gossips, says that they would reach the same boundless hell which the woman-slayer Nannan fell into.[4] The story referred to was as follows: Nannan had a very valuable fruit tree in his garden and one day a fruit of it came floating down the stream. A girl found it and ate it. The courtiers took the guilty girl to their chief Nannan who sentenced her to death. Her people begged him to show mercy and promised to give her weight in gold and yet Nannan did not relent. He had her killed.[5] From that

1. Kuruntogai 135, Narrinai 24.
2. Sexual Life in Ancient India, p. 488.
3. Do. do. do.
4. Kuruntogai 292.
5. Do.

day he seems to have been called 'Nannan the woman-slayer'. The epithet as applied to the chief is sufficient evidence to show the horror with which woman-slaying was held in the land.

## THE IDEAL WOMAN.

"Sita is wholly the Indian ideal of a woman: tender and mild, soft and dreamy as moonlight, self-forgetting, filled with love, devotion, sincerity, faithfulness and yet, where it is a case of defending womanly virtue, nobility of soul, and purity of body, a strong heroine, great above all in long suffering, but great, too, in her unyielding daring pride".[1] Such was the ideal set before the Indian woman and these ideals were common to the whole country. It has been said that for a woman "this is holiness, this is asceticism, this is everlasting heaven, when a woman sées her highest good in her husband, is devoted to her husband with a religious zeal and is good and chaste. For the husband is the woman's god, the husband is her kinsman, the husband is her refuge, the husband's regard is her heaven."[2] The same words, as if in a nutshell, is expressed by the sage Valluvar in his Kural. He says "that the rain would obey the summons of the wife who, not even worshipping God, worships the feet of her husband".[3] The man was the wife's god as could be seen from the above saying. The maid, while sending her friend with the lover, tells him that she has no other kinsfolk than himself.[4] That the man was her refuge could be seen from the words of the girl who says that even if there were to be some mishap for a single day, she could not live.[5] Love and affection of man was the

1. Sexual Life in Ancient India, p. 427.
2.
3. Kural, Ch. VI, 5.
4. Kuruntogai 115-397 ; Aham 247 : 286.
5. Kali-t-togai 25 ; Kuruntogai 309, Narrinai 1

highest good that the woman wanted, for it is said "while love lasts, life lasts and life ceases when separation comes."[1]

Beauty of soul and of body go hand in hand. An example of the Indian ideal of womanly beauty is furnished by the description of Draupadi in Mahabharata. "Draupadi has black curling hair, long eyes like the leaf of the autumn lotus, a scent like the autumn lotus; her face is like the lotus-flower, when it is covered with sweat, slender is her waist, her hair is long, her mouth is red. She is neither too tall nor too short; she has beautiful hips, she is not thin, not too red, and not too hairy".[2] Long black curling hair had been considered as a mark of beauty in South India also. They dressed their hair in five modes and the colour is often compared to that of fully laden black, rain-bearing cloud. Eyes like the dancing fish had been the dream of poets of the Tamil country. Eyes like the blue lotus and fed with the black paint, with fine red streaks have often been compared to the spear covered with red flesh, for the way in which they hurt their lovers. Beautifully arched eyebrows had been the ideal of beautiful women. A woman possessing the forehead shaped like the half-moon was an ideal beauty. For the feet of a tender woman, even the feathers of a swan and the flowers of the anichcha plant were like thorns. The waist had to be almost imperceptible and its slenderness is well illustrated when the poet says, 'the woman has worn flowers with their stalks, and the weight of the stalks break the tender waist of the girl.' The roundness of a woman's s ders has often been compared to the round bamboos. The complexion has to be that of the shoot of mango and asok. This brilliance of youth called "Mamai" in Tamil corresponds

1. Aham.
2. Sexual Life in Ancient India, p. 430.

Acc. No.

to the "lavanyam" of the Aryan writers. This "mamai" was the birthright of every beautiful woman. The teeth must be like pearls or the buds of jasmine in their whiteness. From every woman born with the right proportions, a scent should be wafted from the body. It is said that in Draupadi a scent as that of blue lotus was wafted from her a Kroca's distance.

The face is often compared to a full moon without its scar.[1] It seems the stars of the firmament were puzzled when they saw the face of the girl, for they thought that it was the moon and yet could not understand how the moon had lost its scar all of a sudden.[2] Among many writers the figure, the build and beauty of woman have a greater importance for her destiny, quite apart from conquests over the hearts of men. Sri or Lakshmi is at the same time the goddess of beauty and also of happiness and woman is the seat of Sri and as such brings happiness to the man also by her perfect figure.[3]

**Man's part in society**: Man's life could not be one of love entirely. He had his duties as a king, citizen and a householder. From the elaborate works found on Aham or love, it is possible for us to mistake Tamilian men to be soft-hearted milksops. No, They were men who could fight as well as they could love. This part of their lives, *i.e.*, their wars and other extraneous responsibilities and duties were called Puram. Puram literature is as vast as the literature on love. It was a proportionate combination of love and life that formed the aim of man in the Tamil land. He was given a definite place in society and he had many duties

1. Kural. Ch. 112-6.
2. Do. Ch. 112-7.
3. Sexual Life in Ancient India, p. 434.

to discharge as the head of a family. As a householder he had to uphold the rules of dharma laid down by the sacred books by discharging his duties to pitrus, the devas, guests, relatives and to himself.[1] As a member of the society he had to uphold those who had been neglected, those who were in adverse circumstances and those who came to beg of him.

**Man's duty towards the needy and relatives**: The life of those who did not help the needy was a life without essence. The joy of the capacity to give equalled that of the possession of wealth. There is an instance of a man leaving his wife, to seek fortune, because he thought an indolent man is denied the three kinds of pleasure, that of giving, enjoying and living at peace.[2] It was thought disgraceful for a man to deny alms to those who came to him begging.[3]

It was not only the needy who looked up to the man for help but also his relatives when they needed it. So a man had to help these relatives when they needed it. It is said that the man left his home to earn money so that he might be able to help such of his relations, as might need it.[4]

**Home life as the means to salvation**: The home, with the right type of partner, had been considered as the best place where a man could do the sure tapas or penance which would secure a place for him among the gods. It has been said "therefore and quite logically, of the four stages of the Indian earthly pilgrimage, the condition of the father of the family is over and over again declared as the

1. Kural, Ch. V 1-3.
2. Narrinai 214 ; Kuruntogai 63.
3. Palai-k-kali 2 ; Aham 53 ; Kural, Ch. 23 & 24.
4. Kuruntogai 283 ; Aham 61 ; 173-231, Palai-k-kali 10.

best and highest—a rank for which it undoubtedly has mainly to thank the fact that with this condition the priestly caste, depending on charity, stands and falls. Again the old Upânishad declares that life itself with its pains and sorrows is called tapas (asceticism).[1] Keeping these views in mind Valluvar has said that what is called aram or righteousness is home life itself and he, who in accordance with the world leads the domestic life would be considered as one among the gods dwelling above.[2] They considered that the only happiness that is real is that gained in a home; all the other pleasures are full of infliction, and do not give glory.[3] Such being the value set on the home by the people, it required that the guiding force behind the family life had to be extraordinarily good. Everything depended upon the woman who presided over the hearth. It was she who was called the light of the home. The auspiciousness of the home is the wife and its ornaments are sons. That was the reason why the wife was called 'illal' or the mistress of the house. There is no word as 'illan' or the master of the house in the Tamil vocabulary. 'Illal' is the word to express the place of a woman in the man's life, for it was she, who as the mistress of his house and his heart, gave him a place in society. To those who have no honourable home, the proud gait before their enemies is useless.[4]

1. Sexual Life in Ancient India.
2. Kural, Ch. V.
3. Do. Ch. VI, 9.
4. Do.

# ERRATA

| *Page* | *Line* | *for* | *Read* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | 13 | dutifully | and dutifully |
| 4 | 27 | woman" | woman, |
| 4 | 33 | with her. | with her ". |
| 5 | 10 | Lord" | Lord, |
| 5 | 13 | again : | again '. |
| 5 | 24 | she, | " she |
| 8 | 26 | kalittogai, 59 | kalittogai 59, |
| 9 | 27 | either to ensure | to ensure either |
| 10 | 16 | cirrili | cirril— |
| 17 | 23 | that as | that " as |
| 22 | 16 | our ardour of | the ardour of our |
| 26 | 30 | acknowledgement | acknowledgment |
| 29 | 17 | undrestand | understand |
| 31 | 17 | adament | adamant |
| 32 | 26 | those | these |
| 85 | 29 | and though | though |
| 50 | 24 | oxtraordinary | extraordinary |
| 51 | 9 | intercourse ; | intercourse |
| 53 | 20 | her. | her ". |
| 53 | 22 | Raguel who | Raguel |
| 54 | 10 | night. | night." |
| 56 | 17 | wife and etc. | wife. |
| 58 | 27 | Vows of mortification | Vows. |
| 60 | 1 | her | for |
| 62 | 11 | apirits | spirits |
| 74 | 2 | aphradili | aphrodite |
| 74 | 30 & 31 | devadasis or women, | devadasis, or women |
| 76 | 26 | vesyas of | vesyas or |
| 76 | 27 | (parattai | parattai ( |
| 76 | Foot note | Ilaipuranar | Ilampuranar. |
| 79 | 2 | men of other | men of the other |
| 79 | 16 | thrt | that |
| 82 | 16 | called | called, |
| 83 | 6 | wearing, | wearing |
| 83 | 7 | red, being the | red, the |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 87 | 4 | manimakhalai | manimekalai |
| 87 | 13 | abjectively | abjectly |
| 89 | 10 | subiects | subjects |
| 91 | 17 | Roman Kings | Roman King |
| 91 | 29 | Ettuthoka | Ettuthokai |
| 92 | 32 | cenceived | conceived |
| 93 | 3 | money | coins |
| 105 | 6 | were | wore |
| 108 | 19 | dancing | dance |
| 108 | 24 | produced with | produced by |
| 108 | 28 | must drink, the | must drink, |
| 109 | 20 | prostitnte hereself | prostitute herself |
| 113 | 12 | Arti Smriti | Atri Smriti |
| 118 | 8 | acrificed | sacrificed |
| 119 | 13 | to the anxious | by the anxious |
| 119 | 14 | to the lonely | by the lonely |
| 119 | 16 | method | methods |
| 120 | 21 | but those omens | but omens |
| 128 | 5 | Silappapikaram | Silappadikaram |
| 129 | 17 | out of tho | out of the |
| 132 | 6 | of the rigion | of the region |
| 133 | 10 | padasaalam | padasalam |
| 137 | 17 | no atoning | no atoning ” |
| 137 | 17 | horror with | horror in |
| 138 | 3 | horror with | horror in |
| 140 | 8 | to a full | to the full |
| 140 | 24 | This part | This phase |
| 140 | 25 | were | was |